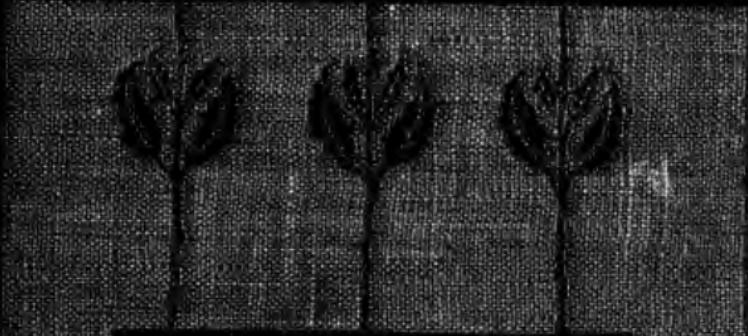




SOME OF OUR PEOPLE



LYNN ROBY MEEKINS

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Martha H. Coward
from
Mrs. Lynn Roby Meekin

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SECOND EDITION

"THE ROBB'S ISLAND WRECK
AND OTHER STORIES"

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

(With a Portrait Sketch by Castaine.)

Since the publication of the first edition of these stories, Cobb's Island has been wrecked by the encroachments of the ocean. What was for a century a great hunting and health resort, with hotels, cottages, a church, and a life-saving station, is now wave-swept and desolate.

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"The Robb's Island Wreck and Other Stories" and "Some of Our People", uniform in style and binding, \$1.00 each, or both in a box, \$2.00.

SOME OF OUR PEOPLE.

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BY
LYNN R. MEEKINS.





to my friend Maxine

a. Castagnon.

SOME OF OUR PEOPLE

BY

LYNN ROBY MEEKINS

BALTIMORE

WILLIAMS & WILKINS COMPANY

MDCCCXCVIII

TO MY WIFE.

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THE RETURNS FROM ST.

MARY'S.

HE came in when there was a lull in the work, as he usually did, for he knew opportunity. Taking his seat in the chair that tilted back, he soon had his cigar lighted and he was one of us again.

"It's no use, boys, I can't stay away. When a man touches printer's ink he is charmed for life—he may wander off but he is bound to return, like Colonel Jones who goes down in his private car once a year just to get a drink of hard cider from the old barrel in the barn."

The Major had been a great editor in the glorious days when the editor wrote one epoch-making editorial early in the week and then wandered among the meeting places of men to hear it talked about. Thus had come a wide circle of acquaintances and the call of his party and his election to Congress, where he served with enough success to perpetuate himself as an office-holder for many years afterwards. He

had been consul and assistant secretary and other things, landing at last under the glorious protection of civil service reform with an income that met his moderate needs. He was destined for greater honors, for Governor or for United States Senator, but he forfeited the pleasures of the rich for the comforts of the poor, and enjoyed the reputation of being one of the powers who made Governors and Senators, although he kept his polities well concealed so as not to forfeit the aegis of the civil service law.

"But journalism is not what it used to be, not what it was in my day and generation. We had papers then, we had editors—we did things. The paper was a being, with good legs and strong lungs, and it was out for a fight or a race or a shouting match every day in the week, every day but Sunday. Look at your papers to-day—just machines turning out endless miles of wood pulp. You spoil white paper and sell it at cost. And the Sunday abomination! Forty, fifty, sixty, sometimes a hundred pages, slushing over the Day of Rest an avalanche of horror. Why do you do it? Even the Lord worked only six days a week while you—"

"Oh, every man gets his day off."

"Boys," said the Major solemnly yet kindly, "you don't count. You may think you do but you don't. I used to harbor the same vanity. As a member of Congress I was an honorable; as consul to Portugal I was both honorable and Respected Sir; as an appointee in some other offices I had an official entity which pleased my pride, but now I belong to the Classified Service. And so do you. You are cogs in the wheel. You are clerks in the department store shooting orders and money to the cashiers' desks and getting back very little change. And a few of you are floor walkers and counter superintendents, and you report on the condition of the stock. 'The Sensation Bargain Counter needs new goods,' you say to the head office, and you are at once ordered to obtain the latest at the lowest rate, but to spare no expense in getting it, and the next week you are advertising 'How A Cross-Eyed Girl Married the Best Man; Affidavit from the Parson; Case Corroborated By Leading Oculists; Dangers of The Altar; Expected Groom Will Bring Suit For Damages; An Incredible Yet Actual Occurrence.' And your reporters—what are they? Messenger boys—mere messenger boys, sent out on errands. And your

editors—what are they? Well-paid gentlemen who answer the business-office telephone. Oh, it is pitiful, pitiful, pitiful!"

The Major took a long draw at his cigar, and we knew he was getting ready to say something about the past.

"Boys," he said, "the good old times did not pay as big salaries as you get but they made up in glory what they lacked in cash. With the big incomes of to-day the papers can do marvelous things, but what is it to sit at a desk and, by writing telegrams, order what you can afford to buy just as you would your groceries. It is all money and bigness and organization and monopoly, and the individual is swallowed up and lost. Why, we had more brains in one of our four page issues in the old times than you have in your fifty-page atrocities of the present. We made the man bigger than the machine. It wasn't columns, but what we put in them. And when we wanted something we got it, even if the business office went broke. You've a net of wires over civilization that do your bidding; you've long distance telephones; you've bicycles, and heaven only knows what else. Your enterprise to-day is simply ticks and schedules and hellos and flimsey. Oh, how I wish you could have known the

old days—the good old days, the days when Dave Ross was in the full glory of his career. There was a real reporter for you. When he went out we never knew when he would come back, but when he came he brought the worth of his salary with him. If he had lived in the ancient days and had been sent after the golden fleece he would have brought it back or there would have been a mutton famine along the Mediterranean. He was the loveliest, best natured and most innocent liar that ever lived. There was not a particle of deceit in him but he could lie like inspiration itself. He was absolutely honest and he had no bad habits, but Lord! how he could lie. I can see him now—tall, spare, placid as a glacier, smooth as a politician, glib as an auctioneer, looking like a preacher and meeting every circumstance of life as if he had received advance notice of its coming. He was the man who did our big work and he did it like the genius that he was."

The Major paused again and waited for one of the telegraph editors to put a head on a piece of copy that had just come in.

"The first time we broke the business office was when we began our feud with the people across the street. They made

some slighting reference to us and we promptly got out our book of synonyms and let them have a broadside. They followed with the rest of the dictionary, and then I believe there were a few arrests for criminal libel and interesting threats of personal meetings and a whole lot of bluster which kept the town on its tiptoes. Just about that time a State election with a United States Senatorship involved came around and the fight was close. The returns were important and we had to have them. It was easy enough to get the main part of the State but the problem was Southern Maryland. There are four counties down there and the single line of railroad ended nowhere and the only telegraph office was fifty miles off. We heard that the other fellows had decided upon a grand coup, had hired a special train, and couriers from every polling place, and all that sort of thing. Of course we had to toe the mark, and Dave Ross was ordered to get the Southern Maryland returns in any way and at any cost. That was the commencement of the struggle which made the business office groan every November. It cost us all the way from five hundred to a thousand dollars for about ten lines of news—but the glory of it! Oh, the glory

of it! Just think of the time when Dave walked into the telegraph office and held the wires until after breakfast. The operator's table was covered with a newspaper and on the walls were pasted more papers to keep out the cold. When Dave had no more copy to send, what did he do? simply said to the man:

"Telegraph your table cover and when that gives out begin on the wall paper," and until eight o'clock in the morning we were getting stale death notices, advertisements, old cablegrams, and the good Lord only knows what else. But we got the returns and the other folks didn't. You couldn't beat him. Why he would just spill money all over the country, and the business office would go into thirty days mourning. It got so bad that even I—who loved the fellow—had to call him to account.

"Dave," said I as severely as I could, "your expense accounts are not satisfactory. Now here is an item, "For treating the party in Southern Maryland,\$68.05." We do not mind the sixty-eight dollars—we don't kick against it at all, but the five cents, what the devil do you mean by that?"

"Dave never moved an eye-lash but called out to me, 'Oh, Major, that's all right. One of 'em took a cigar.' Those

were times when men meant something when it wasn't the machine that did all the work. And the climax of it all. Boys, it was tragic but it was magnificent,—the returns from St. Mary's I mean."

It may be well to tell those who want to know about this great race that after the Potomac river leaves Washington it bends towards the southwest and then makes a huge curve to the northeast and rather suddenly makes a long and comparatively straight run to its confluence with the Chesapeake Bay; and also that the Chesapeake Bay, carrying the drainage of an area larger than England and Scotland, has come nearly two hundred miles almost due south when it receives the Potomac's currents. Between the two is a full, fat and fertile peninsula shaped like a Chinese foot, and the toes of it are St. Mary's county. The toes and more and its hundreds of square miles are historic ground. It was here that the Ark and Dove landed with cargoes of gentlemen who had outgrown the financial opportunities of their native land, and with them were underlings whose offspring afterwards measured up to the opportunities of the new world. It was here that the historical Act of Religious Toleration found its birth. The Catholics

claim it, on the ground that Lord Baltimore, the Proprietor, was a Catholic. The Protestants claim it, on the ground that the majority of the local legislature who originated and passed it were Protestants, and as a detail they throw in the statement that before Lord Baltimore became a Catholic he was a Protestant. At periods there are rather unreligious disputes over this interesting fact of history, but they generally end in the agreement that there is enough glory for both sides and all other denominations, and thus it ends, and whatever others may gain or lose the halo remains with St. Mary's. In good truth it is a friendly place for a halo. Here is a spot unspoiled by the rush and tear of modern madness. Its life is as gentle and as pure and as calm as the tides which rise and fall in its lovely rivers. There are no shouting currents tearing away its nerves and its vitals, but in it and over it is a spirit of repose as tranquil and as satisfied as the life of its unequalled oysters which cling to their homes and grow fat on what the gods of the waters bring to them.

The Act of Religious Toleration is not the only cause that boosts this modest and retired county into occasional prominence. Once a year it votes, and thereon hangs

Dave Ross. From the first effort to get the Southern Maryland returns in the night of the election or the early morning thereafter there were difficulties which seemed insurmountable. The only telegraph station was a half hundred miles away. The four counties are cut up by frequent rivers and streams and there are outlying islands which had to be reached by boats. To gather the figures of the vote meant many messengers, relays of horses and all the facilities of speed and transportation which the country afforded. It meant more: It meant thorough preliminary organization and brilliant dashes at the climax. It also meant resource, which is a polite word for trickery of the sort which is sometimes called enterprise. And thus it was that nothing was left undone—including a few of the Ten Commandments—to win.

Ross' genius shone from the first. He was a combination of Napoleon, Phil Sheridan and Moseby in the intricacy and dash and unexpectedness of his strategy. The Major stated that there was only one line of railroad in Southern Maryland. As one who belongs to the Classified Service, he has a right to forget, but really he should have remembered that there was

another line of road in that section. Railroad building in Southern Maryland has been a fad since steam began to do something more than sing out of a kettle spout. It has been more completely surveyed for railroads than any spot on the map, but generally the surveyors got tired, or if they stood the strain the builders grew weary after making a few miles of road bed, or if they kept on, the money or something else gave out and there it ended. But a road was really built and it had a real engine that drew one car for passengers and freight until it reached a moment of despair and quietly ran off the track and thereafter rusted in perfect peace. The weeds grew taller between the ties and the line was run no more. Except once. Dave Ross had arranged his details with more than usual publicity, and the Opposition had apparently ascertained and checkmated all his plans. But at the critical moment when they expected Dave to appear he was not to be found, and it took a whole week for them to find out that Dave while pretending to establish his base of operations where the Opposition camped, as they thought, on his heels, had played the shabby trick of reviving the old railroad and using it as a short-cut to victory. Then

there were other things, such as hiring men to tear away bridges and cut harness and play various kinds of mean jokes upon the Opposition's messengers. Dave's code of morality in matters of this kind was perfectly simple: "Anything but murder to win." And yet, as the Major said, Dave had no bad habits.

When the climax approached, Dave had a clean record of triumph. He usually beat the Opposition; he was never beaten. Sometimes they got their returns in the same editions, but never earlier than Dave's paper. After Dave used the old road it went back permanently to its rusting, and the regular line had to be the race course.

Nothing could better show the conquering air of Dave Ross than his reception on the crisp October day when he arrived to complete his arrangements for the returns. When autumn comes, Southern Maryland and heaven are next-door neighbors, and that Monday was angelic. It was just beginning to depart in a sunset of matchless splendor when Dave, with head erect and a new overcoat across his arm, stepped off the train. The conductor shook his hands; the brakeman said good-bye and the engineer looked from his cab to salute him.

But by this time he was in the midst of a friendly circle, and the colored porters were on the verge of a fight in their determination to get his baggage checks and his overcoat.

"Home again," exclaimed Dave to his admirers. "Home again. Home again in God's own country," and waving his hand to the west, he added reverently, "Ah, look at that sunset! There are no sunsets like the sunsets of Southern Maryland. I wish I could stay here forever. I tell you, my good friends, that you are blest with the finest place in the world. I take off my hat to you. I take it off to Southern Maryland," and he did so, as he continued, "Hello, Bill. That pup I promised you last year—I intended to send it—honest I did—What?—year before last, was it?—Great Lord, how time does fly!—That pup was the finest dog that ever lived. Yes, he's dead. Poisoned. But I've got another one for you. Gentlemen, that pup I'm going to send Bill just as soon as I get back to the city is the most astonishing dog you ever heard of. Missed him for two days and where do you suppose we found him? Up in the guest chamber, pointing a covey of partridges in a picture. Why that dog—Judge how are you? I

certainly am glad to see you. Up in the office they always say, 'Dave, that is hard work in Southern Maryland, why do you do it?' and I just tell them that the privilege of coming down here and meeting you is all the recompense I want."

"I suppose you will win as usual this year?" asked the Judge, after returning the compliments.

"Win? Will I win? Will a duck swim? Will an old maid pet a cat? Will a politician drink whiskey? Will Bill get that pup? Well, I guess."

"Kernel Ross is come," was all the information needed to make the hotel a rendezvous. Some had preceded him, and he arrived with an audience. There was an easy explanation for this. He brought money to a town where money was scarce. He hired horses and carriages. He employed messengers. He treated liberally. He was a prince of plenty—and he cared not how the business office groaned.

There are a great many colonels in some parts of Southern Maryland and in this town they were epidemic. So Ross became a colonel, too, and there were times when he was promoted to a full generalship, but to this he objected, because it cost too much. At least, that is what he told

Sam, the head waiter. "Sam," he said, "you black nigger, you've robbed me out of every cent I've got now. It cost enough to be a colonel and I can't afford to be a general. The office would kick at the bill. Call me 'mister.' "

"We doan't know dat air word in dese parts," replied Sam with a chuckle. "Kernel, hab some mo' ob de tarrapin."

"Get away from here. No, come back. I'd like to kill you, but the place where you would go is overcrowded," and then he lowered his voice, "Who is that young fellow?"

A slender, pale-faced young man, evidently under twenty-five years and not over a hundred and twenty pounds, sat by himself at the other end of the dining-room. He was apparently about five feet, seven. He had a good strong face and a modest demeanor. Indeed, he seemed oblivious to his surroundings and entirely devoted to the food before him.

"He's de oder paper's man." To Sam there were only two classes of papers, Ross' and the other's. "He's been down heah almos' a week."

"What has he been doing?"

"Riding around and gettin' ready. I'se watched him fer you 'en he ain't done nothin' to hurt."

"He looks wiry," was Dave's only remark as he finished his inspection of the man. "Sam, after the crowd goes to-night, come to my room."

Dave had gone to the dining room early to satisfy his appetite after his long journeying. The crowd that had greeted him—it would be better, doubtless, to call it a gathering, for it was not large enough for a crowd—had partaken of his hospitality. "Gentlemen," he said in his buoyant way, "hospitality in Maryland is not 'How are ye?' but 'What'll ye have?' Kernel, set 'em up." This colonel was the keeper of the hotel and he had prepared the supper for Dave, so that while the thirsty were quenching the fires within Dave was getting his more substantial refreshment. He arose from it and re-entered the room where his friends and admirers—the results and consequences and incidents of his previous campaigns—were ripening under the inspiration that burns more than it quenches. The scene that followed for the succeeding hours must go from us as one of those misfortunes which belong to life and literature.

Dave simply bloomed. "The Judge was just saying that you gentlemen seemed to miss something in the paper for a week or

so last month," he said very calmly, "and it may be you did. But, gentlemen, I can't be there all the time. I have to get away to breathe once and a while. But the paper is bigger than any man, and you know yourselves it is the only one that gives all the news to both parties. What we say is so. If it isn't so it's got to be so. We got the wrong man dead last spring and when he came up to complain we simply told him he had to stay dead long enough for the funeral in order to save our reputation. He—that reform movement. Rot! Just pure, unadulterated rot, and you know it, Judge, as well as I do. They'll never win. Reform is a Yankee word—a Yankee plan to walk into office on the heads of niggers. Why, we won't let 'em win. Well, Dan, how are you? I knew I missed something and it was you. How are the little Dannies? Well, I hope. What? Another one? Great Lord, if the Democratic party doesn't keep up its majority it won't be your fault. That dog. Yes, I had it—a fine Irish setter. Gentlemen, that Irish setter I was going to send Dan was the greatest dog you ever heard of. He was so Irish that he could always tell a Democrat from a Republican, and—well—yes, Dan, he was poisoned with

Bill's pup, but I've got another one for you and he will be sent down just as soon as I get to the city. It's a long time between honeymoons, as the old man said to Xantippe, and I hope you gentlemen will accept the compliments of the greatest paper printed."

There was more of this and it lasted rather late, but Dave kept his head, and after he reached his room he was busy for fully two hours receiving reports of those who had served him. Sam was in his pay. The hotel proprietor was his ally. Others whom he wanted came at his bidding. He had control of the situation. Questions as to the other one satisfied him. He was a young raw reporter who had been sent to beat a man who had an uninterrupted record, who knew the country, who had devised the schemes that had made success, who was king of the whole situation. The raw reporter's name was Devlin and he kept away from the bar-room and went to bed early.

Dave found that Devlin had prepared his plans on his own lines and there was cause for pride in this. It was an open tribute to Dave Ross, and he accepted it smilingly, and proceeded to do exactly the same thing. "Even the Opposition endorse us,"

he said. "But it is always that way. We lead and the others follow."

This plan, in brief, was to establish the straightest possible line of operation and to connect the outlying points by the best and swiftest messengers, so that the collector of the returns with his relays of horses could gather up the precious bits of paper as he sped along. The same plan and the same route made the contest a race actual and direct.

Southern Maryland roads, unlike the people down there, are not all good. Nature, more than man, has made a few exceptions; but Nature did so many things for Southern Maryland that its derelictions in public highways may be pardoned. These roads have bends and angles that represent what Southern Marylanders have lost during the several centuries in not finding out that the shortest distance between points is not in triangles or semi-circles. But, like the Southern Marylanders, the roads amble peacefully and comfortably in-about and round-about and get to their destinations as certainly, if not as promptly, as if the Czar of Russia had been road dictator and had, with his historic rule, drawn his straight lines. This made it difficult for quick work, but Dave Ross

was a man who often said that the one thing in life that made him uncomfortable was to be fettered by facts. And he seldom was, especially when he was after facts.

The situation then, was this: Two special trains, each with an engine, tender and passenger car, slept with disturbed dreams at the end of the railroad, ready to wake the moment the throttle was pulled, and leap forward on the race. They were side by side—one, Dave Ross', on the main track; the other, Devlin's, on the side track. The man who first reached his train captured the single line track and commanded the situation. If the arrivals of the messengers were simultaneous, there would have to be quick work, and Dave Ross had taken the precaution to see that the advantage would be on his side, for the other fellow had to get off the switch, before he could take the main track.

But behind the engines was that drive of over thirty miles with dozens of side connections, absolutely necessary to the fullness and accuracy of the returns. That thirty odd miles with all its side issues must be made within four hours, and bless your peaceful soul, it took grit to do it.

Election day dawned bright and fair. At

six o'clock P. M. the American sovereign had completed his reign and had amiably surrendered his sceptre to his politicians for the other three hundred and sixty four days of the year. It was just growing dark, and the people crowded around the polling places to learn the result. The counting of the votes proceeded regularly, except for occasional interruptions by thirst. At each one of these places, Ross and Devlin each had a messenger, and the messengers were urging haste and were restless under the discussions about marks on Abraham Lincoln's ear instead of opposite his nose, or of irregularities of the stamp on the sick-looking hickory tree which never grew any larger after Andrew Jackson died.

"The returns! For the Lord's sake, hurry; we want the returns," they would say, and the men counting would resent this and light fresh cigars.

When a man races, he wants to be near the other fellow or to know that the other fellow is far behind him. This was a matter of great big chances and very small margins, and the racers therefore remained together; so while the messengers from the different districts and sections were speeding to make connections, Ross and

Devlin were quietly waiting for the beginning of the final race. They knew, for instance, that the sixty-five mile run up Calvert County was on, and that it was superb; that it began with a heroic dash—ten of the best oarsmen of the bay in each boat across the angry waters—then a contest of horsemanship with every nerve strained, with nostrils smoking and speed unslackened, to end in the early hours at Upper Marlboro', which would arouse from its couch when the dust-covered victor stood in his stirrups and fired his two revolvers to announce his triumph, as the poor steed jumped its final length through the streets to the telegraph office.

But Calvert be hanged! It was St. Mary's that was needed to complete the tale, and so from St. Inigoes, Valley Lee, Patuxent, Milestone, Bay and Island Districts, the men were coming, coming, coming, and Ross and Devlin were waiting; their horses neighing; their men looking through the darkness with alert ears to catch the sounds of hoofs and wheels.

Dave re-entered the modest tavern and talked in his superior way to those who had grown mellow under the evening's hospitality. "Old man Jimson used to say," he declared, "that whiskey never

killed a man, but it got him so he'd die. But what of that? What of that? Who gets out of this world alive? Think of some of these goody-goody folks who swear off on earth, expecting to make up for lost time in the world to come, and who find out that they've struck a Prohibition town on the other side of the Styx. Once more, Colonel, once more, and the gentlemen will take the same; only make it a little better, please; some of the best quality this time. And Mr. Devlin—it is Mr. Devlin, I believe—won't you join us?"

Devlin had just entered the hall, which served both for office and loafing place, on his way to his room, and he paused to acknowledge the invitation, and decline it. He then went on upstairs.

"Won't take a drink in Southern Maryland! Gentlemen, that is rank treason. But he'll feel like taking a barrel tomorrow when he sees the paper of the people. Won't he, gentlemen?"

"He will," was the Colonel's response, "but it seems to me, sah, that you're doing very little drinking yourself, sah; you haven't touched your liquor, sah."

"Oh, that's all right," said Ross cheerily, "I have to wait until after office hours."

It was past eight, and it was nearing the

time for starting. Devlin came down wrapped in woolens, and Ross arose and put on his overcoat. Presently both stood together on the front porch, looking silently into the night. Suddenly Devlin turned and said to Ross:

"Mr. Ross, is this to be a square deal?"

"I don't think I like that insinuation," replied Ross.

"I mean no offence; nothing personal, but—well, in other years there have been troubles."

"You mean the time your man, knowing I was riding a timid horse, strewed newspapers all along the road." Ross said this with great satisfaction to himself.

"No, I mean nothing but the plain question."

"Well," said Ross after a pause, "I might ask the same thing of you, but I don't care to, and in a case like this where it is paper against paper, it is man against man, and you will probably do just as I shall probably do—anything to win. Is not that true?"

Devlin laughed in a dry sort of way, and replied, "Well, I suppose we will have to let it go at that."

Then came a distant disturbance, a thump—thud—thud, a dull, drum jolt and

quick patter, patter, patter on the sleeping earth, and in the bright moonlight was a rising cloud, and suddenly in the midst of it came a whoop of victory, and Ross had forgot to say good-night to his rival and had grasped the returns and leaped into the carriage and a whisp of the whip had sent the anxious horses—that knew as well as anybody that a race was in the wind—forward on the course.

"Ahead as usual," exclaimed Ross, but he at once began to incite the colored person who was holding the reins to speed the animals to greater effort. "By the way, didn't I send you a rabbit dog once?"

"Yas, sah, ye did. Mighty good dog 'till he done got ruined."

"Ruined? How?"

"Done sot hisself up fer er coon dog. Good rabbit dog but not ernuf fer coons."

"Shows what pride will do?" remarked Dave, wisely.

The ride was eight miles. With the good start, Ross felt in a measure secure, but this did not keep him from urging the negro to do his best with a faithful promise of a dog that would be enough for coons or any other beasts of the forest. And the vision of a real coon dog soon began its work, for the negro, although busy with the

horses, could not help humming a song. Dave appreciated it, because the effect of the chorus could be seen in the speed of the horses. This was the song:

De ole man coon am a sly ole cuss,
Git erlong coon dog now,
De lady coon am a leetle bit wuss,
Git erlong coon dog now.

Oh, we hunts 'em when de night gits
dark,
Git erlong coon dog now,
'En dey runs when dey hears de big dogs
bark,
Git erlong coon dog now.

But 'deed ole coon hit's no use to try,
Git erlong coon dog now,
Fur when we comes out you'se got to
die,
Git erlong coon dog now.

"I'd ruther hab a good coon dog," said the negro, whose name was Zeke, "than anything else in this here world."

"You'll get it," replied Dave. "But you must drive for it. Git erlong, good horse now, and be there ahead of the record."

The horses went over the uncertain roads without regard to ruts or tracks, sometimes

on a dead run, and the cool November air cut the face and stirred the soul. The night was perfect, a full moon shining from a cloudless sky and stars outdoing themselves in trying to assist in the illumination. The eight miles were made within the hour and at the second point on the journey, where the returns from Quantico were to intercept the race, Dave's usual audience had assembled. There was a cheer and Dave simply said, "Thank you, gentlemen; but where is my man from Quantico? Is he here?"

"He is not, sah; bad roads, sah."

And Dave said something that cannot be printed. And yet he had no bad habits.

It was a case of waiting, and Dave's spirit chafed; but in a few minutes he revived, and after telling his friends that his rival had probably decided to turn the other way and take the water route up the Chesapeake, he became for a moment his buoyant self.

"It's hard waiting, as Aunt Mary said when Uncle Cyrus refused to die on schedule time and the hot dinner for the mourners got cold; but it's all right. Glad to have a rest and to see you gentlemen. Lovely night! Glorious! glorious! glorious! By the way, Bob, how did that bird dog get along?"

"To tell you th- truth, Colonel, he got along too well. His idea of a bird was a chicken. I was obliged to get rid of him."

"Queer, that was a blooded dog."

"Just so, Colonel, just so. He preferred my fancy breeds of poultry."

"That's one on me, gentlemen, and—"

But just then there was a rushing sound with horses on a run coming up the road straight towards the group. And from the other direction came another sound of patterning hoofs. Devlin had arrived and almost at the exact moment the messenger had reached the place.

"Is it for Ross," asked Dave quickly.

"No, Devlin."

"Here," said Devlin, and hastily looking at the returns to see if they were all right, he entered his second carriage with the fresh horses and was off and away without a word to anyone.

It was ten minutes before Ross' man came, and it seemed ten centuries. But Dave knew his team on the second relay was the swifter of the two and he kept his nerve. He was sitting in the carriage peering through the night, waiting for a sound and oblivious to the presence of his friends. Presently the hard knocks on the road told of a horse running at its best, and

almost before the words can be spoken, the papers were in Dave's hands and his own horses, the fresh ones, of course, were leaping through the night.

There was no joking this time; not even the mention of a dog, and those seven miles were travelled faster than they had ever been before, and the joy of it all was that at the next stage Dave saw Devlin waiting. Devlin's returns had not arrived; Dave's had. Luck unspeakable! His fright was now over.

"Howdy-do and good-bye," and he was off with his fresh team of glorious bays, as proud as emperors and as swift as the breeze.

Nine miles faded away well within the hour and Dave was at the last stretch of the race, ahead, far ahead of his rival.

Eight miles more and then the special train, and victory!

Why was that messenger late? The stupid fool! Did he not know that every moment was precious! What could have happened! Great Jupiter! more delay! Hear that watch tick! Every second is a day; every minute a year! Not even yet does he come. But what's that? The patter, patter! Hurry, for heaven's sake, hurry!

"Horse stumbled. Fell. Broke my arm."

Dave heard all this, but broken arms were trifles. "Send doctor's bill to office," he called, as he grabbed the returns, and in a minute he was on his way with Sam—old reliable, never beaten Sam—wielding the whip over the finest pair of horses in the State, horses that were tearing up the road like a whirlwind.

It happened that less than a half mile from the place where the trains were waiting was a bridge across a very respectable stream, and for over two miles before the bridge was reached was a flat marsh country with a road meandering through it in such a fashion that it kept travellers in sight of one another for almost the entire distance.

It also happened that when Dave was well out of the woods upon this winding road and Sam was keeping the horses to the top of their speed, a shadowy something moved along the horizon and Dave saw it.

Cold chills ran through his veins. He took the whip from Sam's hands and lashed the faithful beasts until Sam cried out in protest.

"Kill them, will I? And you too, you nigger, if you don't go faster! Great heavens, man! He's gaining on us—*gaining*—GAINING. Here, give me that whip again! For God's sake, *go—go—GO*." This in frenzy to the horses, and then he stood up and looked back, and the spectre was measuring its steady lengths across the marsh road.

Dave's mind was working intensely. A half mile beyond the bridge was victory, but it might as well be a thousand miles if the horseman kept his gait, for his own team was giving out.

Suddenly the thought he had been seeking came like an inspiration.

"His horse may beat me, but his legs can't," and with the genius of a general he laid his plans.

"He can't swim the river, he must cross that bridge!" That was plain.

And when the carriage passed to the other side, Dave and Sam ran back and began to throw the loose planks overboard until a gap of seven feet had been made, and Dave had said, the county might send the bill to the paper. And then Dave ordered Sam to turn the team around, block the other end of the bridge securely with the horses and the carriage, and to do

everything, except murder, to delay the Opposition. All this was done in feverish haste, and the orders were shouted back as Dave jumped forward on a dead run, his pockets full of copy, his long legs measuring the half mile of road to the special train in marvellous strides. But Dave had been a champion sprinter at college and he knew his powers.

The spectre was approaching the bridge and its human aspect grew at closer range. It was coming so fast that Sam in mortal terror lest it fall into the gap of the bridge, called out:

"You can't git over; big hole in the bridge, sah."

There was a slackening of speed; then the rider saw in the moonlight and the horse saw too, but the animal arose in the air and when it landed it was on the other side of the gap.

But the carriage and the horses, crouched on their all fours, blocked the bridge at the other end.

The horseman and the horse—they seemed part and parcel of the same machine—whispered something to each other or they seemed to do so, and without stopping they arose again and when they came down, they were over everything, and the

man leaned forward and threw his arms around the beast and loved her, and she skipped on in the pure delight of having done it.

* * * * *

Sam and the team overtook Dave Ross and carried him on.

"Deed, Kernel, hit couldn't er ben no 'uman horse ner person; hit were a ghost; hit jest sailed right over dat bridge, 'en it's feet didn't tech nothin' no how, 'en hit had wings, 'cause I seen 'em; no, sah, hit couldn't er—"

But just then the whistle of Devlin's special blew a triumphant blast, as the train rounded the curve on the way to the telegraph station.

* * * * *

"That night," resumed the Major, "I waited and waited. Dave had never failed us. Could he do it this time? Impossible! The press room and the composing room and all the other rooms rang their bells and blew their whistles and blew their whistles and rang their bells and messengers were running to me saying it was time to go to press. But I kept on waiting, and I waited a few minutes over the limit before I let the paper go. Then I sent the

boy to get the first copy he could of our despised contemporary, and when he brought it, I fell back in my chair. It had the returns from St. Mary's, and we were whipped.

"Dave? He came in a couple of days afterwards and wearily asked if we had heard from St. Mary's county. Then I told him what I had heard. Young Devlin was a son of old Colonel Devlin of the Confederate Cavalry, who was never at home except on the back of a horse, and young Jack Devlin could sit on a horse before he could walk and he was the young 'un who was in at the death of every fox, who jumped all the hurdles, took all the fences, and won most of the tournaments. Jumping the gap and the team was easy business for him—he would have jumped the whole river if necessary, for he was on Kate, the famous Kate, who knew and loved him like as a sister loves a brother. Dave's man Sam had cut Devlin's harness and disabled his carriage, but Devlin had expected that and Kate was in hiding for the emergency. And the boy and the mare won the victory.

"After that the papers got together and there was no more racing, no more specials at a hundred dollars a line, no more

THE RETURNS FROM ST. MARY'S.

groaning from the business office. And Dave? He got a place in the State Department and married a widow, and the widow and the Classified Service have tamed his impetuous soul, and if anybody mentions dogs he changes the subject."

The Major arose and said good-night and as he went out he was murmuring, "The good old days. Oh, the good, good, old, old days!"

A HERO IN THE FLESH.

WHEN Oliver Cromwell was bestowed with plenteous water upon the Cheston baby great things were expected. The greatness came. After a few normal years, Oliver began to take on flesh. His parents were the richest people in the county and he was the only child. They hastened to do everything possible to check the calamity. But the less Oliver ate, the more he grew. The air and the water and all the elements conspired to make him fat. It was not obesity, or any other of the big words, but a simple and appalling surplus. He actually seemed to bulge out of every button-hole, and one good dame declared that she honestly believed he had his pockets full of himself.

Of course Salem laughed, but there came a time when the people got used to him, and when his fine mind developed its excellence in the public school and carried off the honors at the academy, and when after the death of his parents he succeeded to the wealth and became the leading person of

the village, there was, in his presence at least, a general and respectful avoidance of weights and measures.

Through it all Mr. Cheston was stately and calm. He pursued the tenor of his way with a deportment that was perfect, with an affability that never languished. But he could not steel himself against accidents, especially those accidents that befall human nature without respect to size, age or position. It seems incongruous to say that he fell in love. As a matter of fact the precipitation was neither instantaneous nor sensational. It was not the boulder rolling from the precipice; rather was it the glacier that had been gradually moving for years but insensible of its own motion until it reached the breaking off place. The warming influence which had slowly melted and moved the heart of Mr. Cheston was as gentle as it was unconscious. The glacier does not realize that it is the small stream flowing beneath its imperturbable calm that carries it forward. Mr. Cheston was similarly uniformed. On his way to his office every morning, he passed a certain yard. He was always punctual—more punctual than anyone else in the town except Mr. James Cartwell, who breakfasted at seven as regularly as the clock struck. When

Mr. Cartwell started to his store at half-past seven, his daughter Mary accompanied him to the gate and after bidding him good-bye turned to her flowers which made the Cartwell front yard the most fragrant and the most beautiful in all the neighborhood. At five minutes to eight Mr. Cheston came along and invariably stopped to say good morning and to discuss the growth of particular plants in which he had an intelligent interest. He was generally rewarded with a decoration for his button-hole. He soon came to expect this and for some reason which he could not quite understand he resented in his mind the presence of a third party at these morning meetings. But often the third party was there—young Stephen Moswell, slender, dapper and bright, a recent graduate from the military school, who seemed fonder of the front yard and the flowers than Mr. Cheston himself, and who often lingered after Mr. Cheston had passed on to his office.

One morning Miss Mary was missing from the yard and the day did not seem to pass as smoothly as usual to Mr. Cheston. The next and the next went by. He was a practical man, giving his time and thought to practical matters, but after the fourth

day he spent an hour in honest introspection, and it was then he discovered that a little current of something had been all the time flowing beneath his unknowing heart. He also found that Miss Cartwell had gone away on a visit, and he felt, much to the distress of his normal reasoning powers, that it was not right for her to go and leave him alone in his unsatisfied longings for five minute chats with one on whom he had never called socially in all his life.

He had never cared for society in the sense of formal visiting. He always felt uncomfortable in a crowded parlor. So it happened that almost every evening he was to be found at his office with Dr. Flook, a dry, thin man with a sharp face and a positive tongue, the usual medical autocrat who rules small towns and declares that each generation he brings into the world is worse than its predecessor.

On the fifth evening after Miss Cartwell's departure Mr. Cheston was late in reaching the office and the doctor opened upon him rather savagely:

"Look here, Cheston," he said, "you haven't been up to the mark lately. You're absent minded. I believe you've got the malaria. That is the fortune of benefactors. They suffer for doing good. If you

hadn't gone round bothering with sanitation and such things you would have kept your health and you wouldn't have ruined my practice. What this community needs is not reform but quinine and whiskey; they want to be sick so as to get dosed, and you are interfering with their legitimate pleasures by trying to make Salem too healthy."

"That's something they'll never accuse you of, Doctor," replied Cheston.

But it was evident that he was not up to his general average. There were fits of abstraction in which the doctor scored his points so easily that he finally arose in disgust and told his rival to take six grains on going to bed and two grains every two hours the next day until he had taken ten. Mr. Cheston shortly afterwards closed the office and walked slowly home.

It was curious how the details he had never dwelt upon before came before his mind. She had long eyelashes and a perfect nose. Her mouth was small and almost a cupid's bow. Her complexion, thanks to fresh air and regular hours, was a match to the tea roses, and there was a fullness and freshness of health in her solid sunny face that seemed as natural as a crop of full blown sweet peas. It had never

struck him as being extraordinary any more than the blossoms on the vines, but when he began to think about the other girls of the town she seemed like a hardy annual in a garden of pale exotics, which was a perfectly foolish comparison, for there were many other girls in Salem who were ruddy-cheeked and weather-proof. Then it came upon him that he always liked to see her with her hat in hand, for her hair was soft and flowing and picturesquely irregular, like the Wandering Jew in the hanging basket on the porch, only of course it wasn't green, but was of that indefinable hue which the sun sometimes leaves in the clouds after it has passed the horizon. And he remembered, too, that she was erect and graceful in form and that she reminded him of heroines he had read about in history, and he began to compound them and evolve a perfect composite. But after all, it was her eyes—her clear blue eyes as perfect as an October sky and as changeful as bubbling springs that looked most brightly upon him in his solitude. Then all of these things came over him in a wonderful wave, and inflating his lungs to their utmost he gave a sigh, and a sigh of this kind from three hundred and fifty pounds of love and emotion made

the floor creak, for he had reached his home and was walking up and down, seeing and thinking as he had never done before.

Dr. Flook had been a surgeon in the war with Mexico. "In one of our battles," he was fond of relating, "a most extraordinary thing happened. The fire was terrific; the bullets were whistling all around us, and at brief intervals pieces of shell hissed through the air in uncomfortable nearness. In the midst of all this we looked up in a tree, and there, sitting as calmly as if we were a thousand miles away and war was never known, was a mother bird attending to her duty of bringing forth another feathered generation. It was perfect peace in the midst of strife."

The doctor sometimes went further and likened this to the town of Salem, "a quiet retired sort of a place, sir, that is a part of the world, but which attends to its work in its own calm way and cares little for the strivings and the excitements of this runaway age."

But there came a time when even Salem was stirred from its business centre to its suburban circumference, for the war between the States had begun and the men who expected to put it down as they would

a little riot were appalled at the future and were calling for more troops and more money and more guns.

Salem could no longer hide in its little nest and every home was filled with apprehension. Habit was still dominant and all looked to Mr. Oliver Cromwell Cheston for the initiative. A meeting was called and the men responded and with them came the women all trying to keep up a brave front but with tears underneath every nervous laugh. The tension was strong when Dr. Flook in a business like manner arose and asked Mr. Cheston to take the chair and it increased as the proceedings went on and the call was made for volunteers. The first to answer was Mr. Cheston. Dr. Flook was next and then the others followed until forty-two had responded. There was a pause. Then Dr. Flook, more nervous than the people had ever seen him, arose and said:

"I move that Mr. Cheston be elected honorary captain of this company."

Diplomatic Doctor Flook! Always equal to an occasion, he was worth his weight in gold now! The vote was put by the doctor and carried unanimously.

"I thank you for this honor," said Mr. Cheston gravely, "but we are not here for

mere honors. I expect to go with you into the field and if I am to have any position at all it must be an active one. I recognize perfectly well that I have certain physical exaggerations which unfit me for command, but I shall take my place in the ranks."

"Oh, no, you won't," interrupted the doctor. "I move Mr. Cheston be elected captain."

It was carried.

"My friends, I thank you doubly for this and I promise you I will do the best I can. Now let us proceed to business."

They wanted Dr. Flook to be the first lieutenant but he was true to his profession and would take no position except that of surgeon. He nominated his young friend Stephen Moswell for the lieutenancy and within an hour the organization was complete.

Thenceforth Salem knew no quiet. The days were taken up with martial preparations; the nights with weeping, and before the new company had caught step it was ordered to the front. Never shall we forget the sight as these heroes marched away to the beating of drums and the breaking of hearts,—Captain Cheston, calm and majestic, plowing the sands and grow-

ing to double proportions when contrasted with the dapper Lieutenant Moswell. With all the swing and dignity they could muster, were the men, and bringing up the rear was Captain Cheston's negro Jim sitting proudly in the buggy drawn by Mr. Cheston's big gray horse.

The tearful mothers and sisters and sweethearts and boys and girls followed the procession for more than two miles and then tramped sadly back to the homes which were to know that the desolation of war is not altogether in the march of armies. And yet as they walked and cried there came before them the vivid memory of a figure imposing in its pride and resplendent in its importance—not the big captain nor the slim lieutenant nor any of the soldier boys, but Jim—black Jim—sitting in that buggy as if driving to glory.

This buggy was a peculiar vehicle unusually low and built with extraordinary care. It was the talk of the town that it was stronger than a stone wagon or a timber cart and that nothing could break it down. Of course the various thicknesses and reinforcements made it heavy but the big gray horse which drew it and which had drawn Mr. Cheston in it for many years was a magnificent animal more than equal to the task.

The day was warm and the roads were bad. But for three hours the big captain led his men. Then they came to a halt for dinner. Captain Cheston and Dr. Flook stood under the shade and talked.

"Surgeon," said the captain, "you will probably recall that in one of his campaigns—I think it was over the Alps—Napoleon rode at the head of his troops in a state carriage."

"I do not recall it," replied the doctor, "but I suppose you are right."

"I remember it distinctly," and then with a nervous laugh, as if not exactly proud of what he was going to say, he added, "I'm not a Napoleon exactly but I find that unless I follow his precedent you'll have to have another captain."

"That's all right. The wonder is that you've walked this far."

"But the men, Surgeon! How do you think they'll take it?" he asked.

"Leave that to me," said the doctor as he moved away, and soon the new soldiers were asking their captain to occupy his familiar place in the buggy.

If it had not been for that buggy Captain Cheston would never have reached the front and this story would not have been told, for he could not carry himself, and no

horse's back was strong enough for his weight, granting of course that he were able to do the impossible by sitting astride the animal.

Coming from a town on the border between the fighting sections, the new troops were not long in reaching trouble. It occurred in the afternoon of the next day. They were plodding along a road of many turns and angles and thickly lined with trees. They were very sore and very blind to the glories of war and longing for the comforts of their town. Captain Cheston was sitting in the buggy and the faithful Jim was half asleep in the sunshine and the reins were loose in his hands. Following was the company.

Suddenly there was a noise ahead, and as the buggy turned the bend of the road Captain Cheston saw the enemy marching towards him. His men had yet to see them and the enemy did not seem to have the faintest idea that the figure they beheld was in command of troops.

But the doubt did not last. Standing upright in the buggy Captain Cheston called in his loudest tones and with the most wonderful self-command:

"Surrender!"

Verily it was enough to command any

obedience but the men in front were not the kind that took orders from the enemy. They did not surrender. They did not even blanch with fear. They laughed. And they were still smiling when they got ready for the conflict.

It was all so quick that nobody to this day can tell exactly how it occurred. Captain Cheston got out of the buggy with as much dignity as he could and gave the orders. There was a roar from both sides and when the smoke cleared away the captain was seen to be holding himself up with difficulty. His lips were tightly compressed and before he could give another order a second volley came from the front and the captain fell. Then the men led by Lieutenant Moswell rushed forward around and beyond the prostrate body; and the enemy, evidently under the belief that there were several companies in the rear, for they could only see to the corner of the road, broke and ran.

Several of the men wanted to remain with the prostrate captain but he waved them on and when they hesitated he spoke sharply and ordered them to join their company. Dr. Flook had reached the side of his friend and was seeking the wounds. He worked quickly and skillfully and stop-

ped the flow of blood and then told the captain that the very best thing to be done was for him to return to Salem. There was no hospital near, nothing but woods and war, and unless he got under cover soon and had good attention the result would be fatal. Captain Cheston had not lost consciousness and although he objected to going back he saw the wisdom of it and the result was that the doctor and Jim fixed him as comfortably as possible in the vehicle and the drive to Salem was begun. Never did man strive more to avoid the ruts and rough places than did the steady, faithful Jim. The captain was suffering intensely but he stood the pain like a martyr and Jim kept up a running stream of talk that ebbed only when the captain closed his eyes for an occasional moment of sleep. And once in his sleep he mentioned the name Mary, which Jim did not understand.

Some intuition told the Salem population, which was now mainly women and children, that news from the front was coming and so people were watching. Mothers lay awake straining their ears in the hope and the fear of catching the sound during the night. Sweethearts arose and sat at windows, and every whisp of the wind

was magnified a hundred fold. So when Jim and his charge reached within a mile of the village the bark of a friendly dog on the roadside started the commotion. The anxious ears were sure they heard the coming of a heavy vehicle and in some unknown way the intelligence spread from house to house until the road was suddenly filled with folks who did not exactly understand why they were there.

But amidst the doubt the old gray—the old familiar servant of the captain—hove in sight and then Jim was seen and then—the captain himself. Not a word was said, but silently, tearfully, the simple people formed lines on each side of the buggy and escorted it through the street. Captain Cheston had sunk back from the weariness of the all-night journey and had slept longer than at any other time and when he opened his eyes and saw his townspeople and the town itself he tried to smile and speak but at that very moment a thrill of pain turned his countenance from joy to suffering.

It was a great problem what to do with him, but a few practical women ran ahead and by the time the house was reached they had turned the parlor into a bed-room, for it was evident that they could never carry

the captain up-stairs. It was with great difficulty that they got him in bed but when he finally reached the smooth, comfortable resting place he went as peacefully to sleep as a babe. Then there was a meeting at the church and the outlining of a course of action. The men were away and the women would have to nurse the captain, and they decided to do this by relays, each of those serving taking turns.

Naturally, through all the excitement and uncertainty Black Jim rose steadily in public importance, and a hole in the high hat he wore elicited the open-mouthed reverence of his race. But Jim subordinated his own heroism in being hit in the hat and gave his unstinted eulogy to his master.

"Captain Ol'ver was 'bleeged to be hit,'" said Jim, calling Mr. Cheston by his first name, and in a conclusive manner. "He was 'bleeged to be hit. Blind men could er hit him. He stood right before 'em 'en never budge er inch, 'en when de bullets come erlong he took 'em. I guess de reason no more was killed was 'cause he stopped 'em. I know he was a sight heavier when we had to lift him up. He was just weighed down wid lead. Eben de old gray felt de difference."

"I guess he was mighty brave," put in an adventurous auditor.

"He was de bravest man that ever lived," said Jim in a manner that left no room for dispute. "It ain't nothin' fer one ob de slim young men like Lootenant Moswell —'though I ain't sayin' nothin' agin him—to stand up 'en fight, 'cause dey kin slip 'tween de bullets. But Mars Ol'ver jest 'bleeged ter stop 'em, 'cause dare ain't no room fer 'em ter git by, 'en he stood right up 'en took 'em all 'till natcherally he fell down."

"But, Jim, how do he live wid all dem holes in him?" asked a more courageous darkey.

"Doctor Flook was dare and plugged 'em up," was the prompt reply.

Mary Cartwell had returned to the village just after the company had left and she became one of the nurses of the stricken captain. She arrived in the morning and remained until one o'clock, when she went home to dinner. She always kept flowers by the bedside. One sunshiny day when the blooms seemed to go well with thoughts of love the captain said he was sorry she was not in town when the company marched away.

She explained that she tried to return in time but could not do so. "Mr. Cheston, the sorrows of war are not alone with the

men. We have the suffering without the excitement, the suspense without the knowledge, until often it comes too late."

"It is very true," said the captain.

"Even now I do not know where he is or what he is doing. I only know that in my heart is a constant prayer and that I am proud of his bravery."

"To whom do you refer?" asked Captain Cheston, uneasily.

"To Lieutenant Moswell. He took command after you fell, you know, and saved the day for the company, and he is to be made captain. Oh, if God will only keep him!"

"You and Lieutenant Moswell are—?"
He could not finish the sentence.

"Engaged to be married," she replied, "and you know now what agony I suffer daily, waiting and hoping and yet fearing to hear lest the news should be bad."

The sick man sank back on the pillow and his eyes closed.

Well could Mary Cartwell fear to hear the news, for the very next day it came and it told of a heroic advance and of a mangled hero. Against all the wishes of friends and relatives she determined to go to him, and she did; and in that rude hospital she became an angel of mercy, and

soldiers who recovered wrote verses about her and soldiers who died went to another world with her name upon their lips.

With Dr. Flook off at the front the medical resources of Salem were meagre, and the proper precautions against blood poisoning which might have saved Captain Cheston's life were not taken. He felt that he was going to die, and one morning he abruptly asked the poor little man who posed as a doctor while Dr. Flook was away, if he knew how to write a will. He did not but he would try, at least he would write what Mr. Cheston dictated.

Very laboriously the little man took down the words. There were many remembrances. His aunts were provided for; Jim came in for a modest amount; Dr. Flook was mentioned with touching affection; a good sum was left for the town, and the church was not forgotten.

"And all the rest and residue of my estate," he went on more slowly than before, for which the little man was grateful, for his fingers were getting cramped, "real, personal or mixed, of which I shall die seized and possessed, or to which I shall be entitled at the time of my decease, I give devise and bequeath, to be equally divided between Miss Mary Cartwell and Stephen

Moswell. I do this as a proof of my admiration for the said Moswell who has been permanently disabled in the service of his country; and as an expression of gratitude and—love.” He said this so gently that the amanuensis looked up and said:

“I did not catch the last word.”

“Affection,” said the sick man with a sigh, “for Miss Cartwell who has been so kind to me in my illness.”

Others had been just as kind but they did not count.

“And my only request is that once a year she shall place upon my grave a few flowers from her front yard.”

“Is that all, sir?” asked the little man as he choked down something.

“That is all. Call some one in and let it be signed.”

In a few minutes this was done and the captain thanked them.

“I think I will go to sleep,” he said gently.

He went to sleep. And the only provision of the will that has not been obeyed to the letter is the sentence about once a year. Flowers are there all the time.

DANIEL SPRING BUDSON.

"Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting,
The soul that rises with us—our life's star—
Has had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar."—*Wordsworth*.

DANIEL Spring Budson was the third of five children. His father, who was in comfortable circumstances, took some part in local politics, being elected to several humble offices and serving out the terms with patriotic thoroughness. A turn of fate or too much politics brought him to poverty and this poverty was as grinding on Daniel as on his father. It tended to make the young man careless and although he stood well in his classes and gathered a slight acquaintance with Latin and Greek and French and Italian this extra knowledge did not aid his local reputation. He was arrested for shooting game on the preserves of a rich man, and, worse than that, he became involved matrimonially with a woman who was older than himself and

who took no interest in literary matters beyond the society news in the county paper. Of course the inevitable clash soon came.

But even amid poverty and disaster Daniel Spring Budson kept his mind remarkably alert. The people who spoke slightlyingly of him and sympathized with Mr. and Mrs. Budson for the misfortune of having such a good-for-nothing son did not know that he was storing his mind with wonderful material. Voices sang to him at night. In the daytime, visions of beauty swam before his eyes. Dull words entered his ear and became sentient. His soul was full of exquisite music.

Amid the dreams was a constant longing for the city. He could close his eyes and see a time when he would be able to return and buy the farm of the man who had had him arrested, and better still, when he could throw great handsfull of gold into the lap of the ever-complaining Mrs. Budson.

The exact date of his going to the city is not known but it was about the year 1884. He carried with him a roll of manuscript. The few dollars he had were borrowings from friends whose generosity outran their prudence. His first mission was to a newspaper office. He had read in

the paper what journalism had done for literature and he believed this as firmly as he believed that it was hungry for new talent, eager for the light of a new genius, even if he did come from the backwoods. So to the office of this able journal, with absolutely the largest circulation, Daniel Budson went.

After long waiting he was admitted to the editorial presence. "I would like," he said, "to contribute to your paper. I live in the lower part of Arundel county—"

"I am very sorry," the editor replied, "but we don't need a correspondent at that point."

"It is not that," said the young man. "I have with me a specimen of my work." He drew forth the bulk of foolscap and laid it gracefully upon the desk. When the editor saw it was poetry he quickly said, "We never publish a poem more than a third of a column long. I bid you good-day, sir, and thank you for remembering us."

Almost before Daniel Budson knew anything at all he was slowly descending the steps. But he was what the average poet is not—a philosopher—and he found a cheap hotel and went uncomplainingly to bed.

It was an unhappy trick of circumstance that this inspired soul had to satisfy his human longings on a fifteen cent breakfast, but he did not mind it. Far above his digestion was an ambition that consumed even hopelessness and reduced hunger to an humble basis. After breakfast, he wandered to the neighborhood of a theatre and loitered there until the manager would condescend to see him. When ushered into the presence of this theatrical autocrat he stammered a few words before he finally reached the purpose of his visit.

"I don't like to take up your time," he said modestly, "but I think I have a play which you would like to produce."

The manager's face took on a patient arctic expression as he asked languidly, "What is it about?"

"It is a tragedy in blank verse," he replied. "I have been impressed by the noble richness of dramatic material in American history; of a race of splendid people driven from their homes by the forces of civilization, and of the remarkable varieties of character which this unprecedented conquest has produced, and as eloquently and as forcibly and as poetically as I could I have told the story in these five acts."

"Five acts did you say!" exclaimed the manager. "Do you take this for a Chinese theatre?"

"If I remember correctly," replied Daniel Budson, modestly, but with dignity, "nearly all of Shakespeare's plays have five acts."

"Oh!" replied the manager laughingly, "so you're another Shakespeare, are you?"

"That is for you to decide," said Mr. Budson.

"Well, my young friend, I will be plain with you. Even if you were ten Shakespeares rolled into one, we would no more think of producing your five act play than we would of burning the house. Shakespeare is all very well because he has three centuries of fame and does not need advertising at twenty cents per line in the local newspapers; but you must agree with me that many of his plays lack dramatic situations and if they were not such a fad, they could never succeed. Take Hamlet, it has really only one good situation in three hours of talk, and the public of to-day would never stand as much blank verse if it had not been drilled into them by books and schools and literature generally. You mean well, doubtless, but you don't know."

"But surely you will read this for me,

and see if it has merit?" asked the young man.

"Don't let me give you any false hope," replied the manager. "Years ago we had a stock company in this city, and we also had good acting. And then we sometimes considered new plays. But now, every actor we used to have, even in a minor part, has become a star and all we do is to play attractions. The idea of producing a new play and especially the idea of presenting a five act tragedy is prodigiously preposterous. Why, young man, don't you know that even '*Pinafore*' failed here on its first presentation?"

"No, I did not know it," answered the young man sadly, "but I am glad to hear it, and I thank you for your kind attention, and I bid you good-morning."

He did not know what to do next, but finally he thought of a university whose fame had spread throughout the world. To one of the head officers of this institution he made his way.

"I have come," he said, "to seek your advice and perhaps your assistance. I am from Arundel county, from the same section which gave to you the man who furnished the millions for this great school, and I crave your patience, not only that I

may plead my cause, but that you may show you appreciate a county which has made this institution possible for the world."

The professor looked at him somewhat wildly, but repressed the emotion that struggled in his countenance.

"I shall be glad to hear what you have to say," he said.

"Doubtless you have read," said the young man, "how Pythagoras recognized in the temple of Hera the shield he had borne as Euphorbus in the siege of Troy. You also know of instances where the human soul has reappeared in other bodies after centuries of silence."

"Pardon me," exclaimed the professor, "but I do not exactly catch the point."

"I am sir, the re-incarnation of William Shakespeare. My soul recognizes as its own the words attributed to him three centuries ago. It feels in itself the same powers that it then exercised, only they are now stronger and greater and better. I have mentioned this fact to no person, preferring to let the world fall upon it as a discovery. But my experiences in this city have been so discouraging that I must confess to you that Daniel Spring Budson of Arundel county is the sub-existent Wil-

liam Shakespeare of Stratford-upon-the-Avon, in England. He was born in April, 1564; he married when he was eighteen years old. He married unhappily, and his father failed in business after a career in politics. He was arrested for poaching. He had thoughts and did writing about which his rude and coarse companions knew naught. After three centuries, all these things are duplicated in my humble career. I was born in April, 1864, just three centuries after William Shakespeare, and all the incidents of his chequered and adventurous life up to the time of my present age have their modern repetitions. He was twenty years old when he set out to a city to conquer fortune, and the day I started for this city was my twentieth anniversary. I feel, sir, that the future is to be a continuation of his illustrious life, and I come to you asking that this university take me up, so to speak, and give me and my blank verse a satisfactory start towards fortune."

It was a new experience for this most admirable scholar and he scarcely knew how to meet it. Indeed it were better to leave this unhappy episode and its painful revelations out of this account entirely. For in the course of the half hour which the

scholar generously gave to the rustic, it was proven beyond all peradventure that Daniel Budson did not know enough to enter the Freshman class of the university. To his protest that he was better informed and knew more things and had a wider knowledge in every direction than the pre-existent Shakespeare, the response was a sad shake of the head as if that meant nothing and proved less.

"You entirely misapprehend the character and direction of modern education," said the scholar. "Culture is no longer a smatter of many things but deep drilling in a few things. The world has grown so enormously that the most a man can hope is to know one or two things well, and any university that tried to exist as schools existed in Shakespeare's day would amount to a very little in scholarship."

"Do you mean to tell me," asked Mr. Budson, "that if William Shakespeare were here present in the flesh he could not enter the Freshmen class of this university?"

The scholar ignored the point and told Mr. Budson that genius was a thing apart, and that universities could not be maintained merely for the accommodation of genius.

"But, surely," protested Mr. Budson, as a last effort, "you devote much attention to the elegancies of literary expression."

The scholar laughed. "Oh, of course, but it is more incidental than essential. Form is merely a fashion. We mine the gold here, but we are not goldsmiths, and smithing is the trade that we pick up, if we pick it up at all, along the outer edges of our more important work."

"Then what shall I do?" asked the young man in real desperation.

"My advice to you," said the scholar, "is to go to New York. You will be able to get the highest prices for your work there, and you may achieve a reputation that will pay you well, and in after years if you should happen to become very famous and are sufficiently old, this institution may recognize you by inviting you to lecture."

Daniel Spring Budson went to New York. Of his career there the details are lacking. How he lived at first no one knows, but then neither do we know how Shakespeare lived in London in those first indigent and melancholy days. Budson did not hold horses as Shakespeare did, but he might have been a conductor on a cable car or he might have earned his food on fugitive flights of mercenary fancy, pos-

sibly exploiting the best soap or the merits of a remedy for grip. At any rate we do know that he became attached to a theatre as utility man, filling humble parts when needed, helping to smooth the passages of new plays and giving voice and pen for something less than twenty dollars a week. In these hard but not necessarily cheerless days he was sending his five-act tragedy to the magazines and publishers, wasting his patience and his postage stamps with heroic persistence. From the first magazine came a printed letter informing him that his article was not exactly adapted to its columns but that the return did not signify that it was lacking in merit. It would be a dreary round to follow this manuscript upon its unhappy journey. It simply did not fit the places to which it was sent and it was invariably returned with a courteous note. After the magazines, he tried the book-publishers, and here the delay was longer and the letters were more discouraging.

"We regret," wrote one, "that the condition of the book market does not justify us in venturing upon the publication of a long tragedy such as you have been kind enough to submit to us. The problem of putting forth a volume of verse, especially

tragedy, is a very delicate matter, and a risky undertaking in the peculiar state of the public preference. We mention these things so that you will understand why we are regretfully obliged to return to you your manuscript, with our most respectful apologies for the delay, a delay that has been made necessary by our sincere desire to give to the tragedy every possible advantage of patient and complete consideration."

But destiny was working out a kinder fate. So useful had Daniel Budson been around the theatre, that the managers in a fortunate interval where nothing else was in sight, consented to produce the tragedy upon the stage. A drag net was cast and a company of modern tragedians was secured. Oh, the variety and characteristics of this motley gathering! During the rehearsals, Daniel Budson was several times on the verge of insanity. In vain he protested that a noble red man did not have a Milesian accent. In vain he complained that the English officer of the eighteenth century did not shout heroics in Germanic gutturals. In vain he implored that Colonial life did not present the same racial differences as in modern Castle Garden. But all of these things went for naught. They

were modern tragedians, and they knew their business a good deal better than any wild-eyed rustic.

The play was produced. By a liberal distribution of free tickets there was a large and patient audience. Through politeness it remained until the fall of the curtain, and each of the tragedians, shouting heroics in his own manner, received plaudits from his own friends. At sixes and sevens, the play went through, and a moderate success appeared to have been scored.

But there was a difference in the morning! The critics jumped upon the production like school boys on a foot-ball. Several of them acknowledged that the verse seemed to have a certain dignity, but without exception they all claimed that the movement was too slow, the construction was involved, there was not enough action, and there was too much language. They were one voice, furthermore, in saying that if the play was to continue, the author would have to cut out most of the long speeches and soliloquies, for the simple reason that they delayed the performance without compensating for the time they wasted.

Daniel Budson ate no breakfast that

morning, especially after he had read the following: "At the Comet Theatre last night, a tragedy was produced. It was by Daniel Spring Budson, whose middle name gives an idea of his gorgeous versification. It was a blank verse melodrama, dealing with Poor Lo, and a long list of white men, and it was full of heroics and stage thunder, ending in a general massacre of Indians and dramatic proprieties. Fennimore Cooper and the yellow-covered dreadful were dished up in one conglomerate eruption of adjectives and aborigines. Our old friend the border villain who used to advance to the front of the stage and shout, 'Belud!' and fire off a horse pistol, was not in it in comparison with the voluminous hero who carried a stately presence and an arsenal of revolvers and words. The audience stood it with noble endurance, and the actors struggled as if they were trying to earn their salaries, but the play is utterly preposterous, and the wonder is that it ever found production on the stage of such a theatre as the Comet."

In the middle of the week, when the audience had dwindled to a corporal's guard, Daniel Budson read in the paper that a famous farce company "last night played its two thousandth performance to the

usual crowded house," and "another rattling farce with its high-kicking specialties and the champion of the world, continues to crowd the Saturn at every performance."

What became of Daniel Spring Budson no one knows. He disappeared, and the singular part of it all is that no one took the trouble to find out where he went. If he had been a politician drawing a small salary or anything of that sort there would have been much commotion and the searching of continents. But the poor genius was not at home in this age of the earth and he probably went his way to another sphere. But shall we lose hope? No! No! In another three hundred years perhaps the cycle of genius will have made another course and the world will be better prepared for the coming.

ABNER.

OF course not. I understand why you do not want it. Times *are* hard. No doubt about it. It has been a bad year on the crops, and you don't feel that you can afford to spend money on books, but," and here the agent bent confidentially forward, "this is a work that you must have. I took special pains to come to see you about it. I came because I have read your letters in the county paper—letters that are attracting attention outside of this county. I knew from them that you were a man of intelligence who could appreciate a great work and so I came and I am glad I came. As I walked up the lane I saw a handsome young man for whom I predict a great future—your son, if I am not much mistaken?"

"My boy Abner."

"I knew it," asserted the agent with victorious emphasis. "I knew it. The son of his father, a regular chip off the old block. That boy is going to be a great man. Mark you! I say he will be a great man. It is stamped on his face."

"Abner is a good boy," said the old gentleman, "and a good son. He has not had the advantages that I had hoped to give him. He was at school less than a year; he ought to have been there several years, but the farm had to be attended to and I couldn't spare him. But he has studied some and when he gets his chance he will make his mark."

"Then I'm doubly glad I came," the agent said with a tone of real interest. "I'm in time to do you a very great service. You want that boy of yours to succeed in life. You want to help him. That's natural. You can do it. This great work is your chance. It's the practical education of the century condensed in one volume. Nothing succeeds like success and this book tells all about success. Put it in the hands of your son and he will catch the spirit of success just as quick as he would catch the small pox or the measles. Allow me to show you," and he moved still closer. "Right here in these pages are the lives of the successful men of America. Not a few, mind you, but all—every one—with portraits from photographs taken specially for this great work. Did you know, sir," and he drew himself up as if for the communication of some all-impor-

tant message, "that of all these men more than two-thirds had the course of their lives changed by the influence of books? Books, sir, of people and about people who had succeeded? Our great Emerson said that biography was the best guide for youth, and you remember that Carlisle declared that biography was the only true history. Why, sir, our biggest millionaires owed their rise to fortune to what they read, and what would have become of our Presidents if they had missed the books that launched them on the tide which taken at its flood leads on to fortune?"

This came forth with all the happy eloquence of a man unfettered by fact or the ethics of quotation.

"You want this book. You must have it. It's the last copy, and as I feel an interest in the success of your son I'm going to let you have it for only three dollars, although every other copy of the edition sold for four. Take it, sir, and you will see the day when you will thank me for having brought it to you."

Poor Daniel Green! Fortune had cut out great things for him, but he had not measured up to his destiny. It might have been different if circumstances had been less hostile, but monopolies were so inso-

lent, taxation was so unequal, politics was so corrupt, and the world was so utterly out of joint that he grew tired of striving, and let the farm run down and his debts run up while he railed at fate and wasted his time and substance in letters to the county paper. He dreamed of what he could do, if he had the power, but while government and national development and iridescent possibilities of high offices seeking good men claimed his thoughts and his speculations, the whitewash faded from his house, and the gates dropped from their hinges, and the fences began to fall away, as if in sympathy with his own discouragement.

The trouble, too, was that his apathy in material things had affected his son Abner. Mrs. Green had died when the boy was ten years old. This good woman, when in her health, kept order on the farm by the force of her practical common sense. But when she was gone Mr. Green's few energies drooped into those fine intentions which see much and accomplish nothing. Abner was now twenty-two, a man in age without a man's education and experience. He had been to school only ten months. There his ambition began to take wings, and he wanted to do something, but he could not

leave his father, and that was the end of it. Even John, who as a waif had come to the farm and who had grown to the dignity of the only hired man on the place, shared the common restraint, but it must be said in justice to him that he was the most useful of the three, because he was not bothered by either imagination or ambition. Content with wages that were never paid he existed in the full satisfaction of all he wanted to eat, and a comfortable place to sleep.

Mr. Green was nursing the book on his lap when Abner and John came from the field,—Abner, a fine, sturdy fellow, nearly six feet tall, manly in bearing, and bright in countenance; John, more round than erect, older in years, but yet a child in comparison with Abner.

"Abner," said Mr. Green, after John had passed on to the house, "one of the sorrows of my life has been my inability to give you a good education."

"That's all right father," he replied cheerfully.

"My son, it isn't all right. I see now that I have been selfish. I might have allowed you to go to school. I can never forgive myself for not allowing you to go, but what's past is past—we cannot recall

it," and then changing his voice, he added, in a more practical way, "I have bought this book for you. It is a book on the success of successful men. It tells how they rose from even humbler circumstances than those that surround you. My son, I want you to read it. Study it. You will find practical examples of what I have often told you, that success is the grasping of opportunity—the reaching out. When I am gone—"

"Now, father, you must not say that."

"Yes, I must, my son. It will soon be time for me to go. I feel it more and more every day."

He had been saying this for ten years, but as usual Abner listened as if he had never heard it before.

"When I am gone," repeated the old gentleman, "I want you to strike out in the world. It's the only way you can conquer. The soldier who never fights never wins battles, and the mightiest battle that ever was fought is the battle of life. Take the book, Abner, and read it, and remember that no circumstance is too small for your attention. Look to the little things, and you will be great in big things."

For once Mr. Green was right. Two weeks afterwards he died. In those two weeks the book had been read and re-read

by the son, who found in it a hope he had never felt before, an inspiration that had never moved him. Way down in his soul were longings for something broader and better than the sunrise to sunset toil on the farm, but they had not dared to find expression until the words that he read gave them voice, and opened his eyes to the possibilities of achievement. At first, it looked so big that his courage faltered, but when he read how poor boys like himself had started on nothing, and moved up the plane of life to the elevations of fame and fortune, his heart grew stronger.

After the funeral came the public sale. There were more debts than assets, and the creditors pounced upon the little property as soon as the law permitted. The people came and crowded in the house and filled the yard, for November was a dull month, and they had nothing better to do. Abner and John had wandered around, bidding good-bye to everything. Then came the auctioneer, with his blatant voice and coarse wit, turning the long silence of the old place into a bedlam of noise and laughter. After the farm had been bought in by Mr. Anthony Cobb, who held a mortgage on it, Abner's emotions began to get the better of him and he walked

around the corner and turned toward the big poplar tree where he hoped to find a bit of solitude.

As he did so a young woman approached from the opposite direction. She was tall but not as tall as he. She was dressed plainly but with attractive taste. It would be wrong to call her beautiful but there was a rare womanliness about her that seemed a part of sunshine. Her face had the repose of a practical mind and the sweetness of an angel's amiability. Her eyes were large and glorious, as serene and lovely as the quiet blue of the autumn sky.

Jane Cobb! Many a time had she disturbed Abner's thoughts and many a struggle had he had with himself to forget her. He had been with her at school; he had watched her at church; he had composed unwritten messages of which she never knew, and now, of all persons, she was standing face to face with him and he with her and the big lump of nothingness in his throat was making him feel like a fool bereft of speech.

"How are you, Abner? I did not think I'd come but as everybody else was here and the day was so fine I changed my mind. I want to tell you that I am very sorry."

"I thank you," and then with a forced smile that partly dislodged the choking sensation, he added, "I hope you will enjoy it."

"No, Abner," she replied seriously, "I do not enjoy it. It is the saddest thing in life, this breaking up of a home, and when I said I was sorry I meant that you have my deepest sympathy. Are you going to move away from the neighborhood?"

"I do not know," he answered. "I have not any plans—haven't had time to think of plans."

She extended her hand to him and said, "you will believe me, won't you, when I say I'm sorry?"

"I do believe you," he replied, "and God bless you for it. It's the only kind word I've heard to-day."

And then feeling the lump coming back, he hurried on around the house and left Jane standing there as if she did not exactly understand the young man. Abner walked slowly along the side of the yard which was at that time vacated, and summoned all his will power to repress the emotions which he felt to be unworthy of him as a man. Finally, he turned the other corner and mingled with the crowd.

A half hour later the people saw Abner

and John go down to the barn, but they did not see them making their way over the field under the cover of the fence nor did they hear Abner saying, "Of course, I guess they expect us to stay in the house all night, but, John, I just can't do it. It's not ours any longer."

"That's how I feel, Abner, but where are we going to sleep to-night?"

"I'm blest if I know," and they both became thoughtful.

They walked along at a good gait until they came to the fence at the edge of the woods, and as if controlled by a common impulse they halted on the top rail and sat there in solemn meditation.

"Anyhow, I'm glad it's over," said Abner with a sigh.

"It was worse than the funeral," said John.

There was another pause, but presently Abner brought back his far-away thoughts.

"John," he said, "how would you like to go to store-keeping?"

"What on?"

"Nothing,—that's what all these millionaires commenced on."

"We don't know nothin' about keepin' store."

"We'll learn."

"Who's goin' to start us?"

"I was thinking if we could get old man Cobb to let us have that house down at the cross-roads we could borrow a dollar or two and start in just for luck. There ain't any store in this neighborhood and I believe we could make enough anyhow to live on. We've got to do something."

"No doubt about that. Where are we goin' to get our supper and lodgin'?"

"John," replied Abner with a slight tone of resentment, "all these rich men had to go round hungry before they struck luck. If you're going to give in like this you'll be poor the rest of your days."

John was silent. He propped his boot heels on the second rail and bending his body forward placed his elbows on his knees and his chin in the palms of his hands.

Abner was disposed to argue the point. "I've read all about these rich men," he said, "and I tell you that some of them when they started out were no better off than we are." Only a few lingering rays of light were left of the day and the night was rapidly encompassing the earth, but from beneath his ill-fitting coat Abner drew the priceless volume.

"You brung it, did you?" asked John in evident disappointment.

"Of course I brought it. This book is worth more to me than the old farm."

"I guess it's mighty nice to know how to read," said John, "mighty nice, but I wish the old book had never come to the house. You're not half as sociable as you used to be. 'Course the book can talk to you but who's goin' to talk to me?"

Abner laughed one of his cheery old laughs—the first since the day of his father's death, and he followed it with a slap on John's shoulder that threatened to upset his equilibrium.

"Well, anyhow, it's good to hear a laugh once more," John declared. "I'd begun to think we'd gone into the long-faced business for good."

Abner became serious. "I feel, John, as if we'd escaped from somewhere; just like a bird when it gets out of the cage." He was turning the leaves as he spoke and when he came to the page he wanted he held it up, "Do you see that man?"

"Yes, I see him. He's pretty enough to balk a mule."

"That man's worth forty millions of dollars. Think of it! Forty millions! Lots of them in here are worth millions, too, and they were all poor. Some of them were barefooted and you know we're not that

bad off. I like this man because he didn't do everything all at once. He started a little store and worked up and up and up 'till he owned about everything in sight, and he says—I can't see to read it, but I remember his words—he says 'begin modestly, deal honestly, take good risks, and keep eternally at it, and you'll succeed.' And I tell you, John, that the reason these fellows got along was because they had the nerve to strike out. One over in the back part of the book—he's worth twenty millions—says, 'No young man will accomplish anything or is worth anything unless he has confidence in himself' and the one next to him in the book says, 'Nerve is better than genius and pluck will beat luck every day in the week.' "

"That's all right, Abner, but have you got the nerve to ask old man Cobb?"

Abner hesitated and John had to repeat the question.

"Yes, I have. As the fellow who made ten millions said, 'Never put off anything. If it's worth doing, do it at once.' I'll do it this very night."

He sprang from the fence and called to John to follow. Night had come on but they knew the woods as well as they did the public highway. They proceeded sheep

fashion until they reached the milldam and they went over the dam to the house of Mr. Anthony Cobb. John remained at the gate and Abner proceeded up the path. Before he reached the door a sudden weakness came upon him. He paused as if to breathe a prayer. "Just so she don't come to the door I can pull through," he muttered to himself.

But she did come. "Why, Abner. Walk right in," she said. "We are very glad to see you."

"No—no—thank you, Jane—thank you—I just wanted to see Mr. Cobb."

"I'm very sorry but he went to town after the sale." The light shone through the open door and disclosed John with his elbows on the gate. "John, is that you?" she asked and then she added, "Both of you come in and have some supper."

John's listlessness disappeared as if by magic and he opened the gate and started forward but he was stopped by Abner's words. "We are very much obliged but you must excuse us."

Then with a good-night he went on down the path and John followed him over the dam in melancholy silence.

"Abner," he said presently, "when them three millionaires of your'n were goin'

hungry did they throw away chances and starve for the fun of the thing or did they do it just 'cause they had to?"

"John, you haven't any pride."

"Maybe not, but I've got an appetite as big as this mill pond."

In that part of the country there is a stream not large enough to be a river—almost too small to be a creek—that winds in and about for many miles, and wherever it dips between ridges of high ground there is a dam to intercept its progress and to store up water power for a mill. The dam at this point was a big embankment of earth with a flour or grist mill at one end and a saw mill at the other and with a great rude trough of thick timber in the middle for a flood gate to carry off the surplus water. The machinery of this gate was primitive and cumbrous—big contrivances of thick boards that to be operated had to be raised by main force and awkwardness.

For more than a year the saw mill had been idle. It was not much of a building at best,—simply a plain shed of ample proportions with windows concealed by big broad shutters, and roof of old shingles that had grown tired of one another and parted company and turned their faces to a thousand different angles, as if inviting the

sun to warp them from their fastenings and allow them to drop to the ground and decay in peace.

Abner plunged through the darkness with John following. When they reached the saw mill he stopped.

"John," he said, "we've got to sleep somewhere and I guess we'd better try this."

"But how about supper?"

Abner replied, with a slight tone of disgust, "Oh, go over into the orchard and get some apples, and while you are gone I'll pick out a place for a bed."

When John came back with his hat full, Abner had selected the spot for the night's rest. In all truth John was not happy and he even said that he did not want to be a millionaire and then he sank into a sleep that many a millionaire would have given his millions to enjoy.

Abner was sleepy but at first he could not sleep. The face of Jane haunted him with a fascination he had never seen before. Much as he had liked her, he had never felt what had come to him that day. When she spoke so sweetly the few kind words it seemed—she seemed—altogether different. And yet he knew it was foolish for him to think of her. She was beyond him. Her

father had fully ten thousand dollars—he wasn't worth a cent—and he was going to ask her father, who was not an approachable man, the biggest favor he ever asked anybody in his life. "But I'll do it," he said, "I'll do it. That's how they all succeeded. They struck out." And then he forgot about the sale and thought of Jane, and as he thought of her he fell asleep and dreamed that he was at the supper table and she was helping him to hot biscuit and steaming coffee and fried chicken smothered in rich brown gravy.

When Abner awoke the next morning, John was standing over him. "Breakfast is ready," he said, and Abner looked and saw two biscuits and a piece of cold chicken. Before he could recover from his astonishment, John explained.

"I've been up more'n a hour. I thought I'd go over and see if old man Cobb had got back. Miss Jane asked me if I'd been to breakfast. I didn't ask to be excused—I didn't—but set right down and paralyzed things. When she went out of the room I put the two biscuits and chicken leg in my pocket and I'm sorry it's not more."

The incongruity of the thing began to dawn upon Abner. He had forsaken the old home because Mr. Cobb had bought it

and here he was occupying Mr. Cobb's saw mill and eating his apples and John had literally stolen a breakfast for him from the Cobb home. The only excuse he could make to himself was that nobody was using the mill, and, anyhow, he couldn't think of going back to the farm. Worse than all, was the fact that Mr. Cobb was not at home and would probably not return until the next day. This meant more waiting and more loss of time. Indeed Mr. Cobb did not return that night and the next day a heavy rain set in. John trudged again to the Cobb house only to find that they did not expect him until late at night as he had sent word that important business detained him in town.

All through the afternoon the rain came down dismally. It was very tiresome, waiting in the old mill, but there was nothing else to do, and Abner and John spent the time as comfortably as they could, Abner reading from his book and John falling regularly to sleep as he read. When nightfall came the steady patterning on the old roof did not disturb them. The sooughing of the wind among the trees did not bother them. The creaking of loose boards, the rattling of the old shutters, was no interference with their slumbers. But

just before the break of day Abner awoke and he suddenly realized that it was a very unusual storm. He sat up and listened and then nudged his companion, who also sat up and listened.

"I wonder if it's been going on all night?"

"Don't know," replied John, "but if it has we'd better be moving. This old dam won't stand much of a strain."

Abner made his way to the front of the mill. By the first murky light of the dawn he saw the universal wetness of everything and as quickly observed that the water had risen considerably in the pond. John joined him and together they watched the downpour.

"If it keeps on, the upper dam will break sure as thunder," said John. "They're not running the mill now and there's nobody to look out for it, and if it breaks it's good-bye here."

"Look, John," exclaimed Abner, "look! it's getting higher. I'll bet she's broke. This end is all right. Come on to the other side to see how it is there."

They found everything safe as far as the floodgates. They tried to lift the gates and thus relieve the pressure, but they couldn't budge the huge timbers. Several times

they threw all their weight into the work, but it was no use. Then Abner started in a run toward the grist mill. They had not gone fifty yards when an exclamation told that the break had begun. They reached the place as soon as they could and found a stream of water cutting a small channel across the sand. In an instant Abner was on his knees digging with his hands and throwing the dirt to check it and John was helping him with all his might and main. But the stream was running faster than they were hindering it. Abner looked around for something to use—for a shovel—or a board—or a log—but there was nothing in sight.

"We can't do it," said John, "it's no use to try."

But Abner did not heed him. His mind was working with an intensity it had never known. As if in a flash the stories in the book of how men had saved railroad trains or stopped machinery or measured up to a crisis which involved life and property went through his brain. If he could only do something, what a satisfaction it would be! Perhaps this was his first great opportunity. But what could he do? Suddenly the idea came. His ingenuity rose to the occasion. Spreading his

coat tails so they would do the most good he sat down in the middle of the channel and with a voice more imperious than John had ever heard he shouted:

"Pile the dirt back of me! pile the dirt back of me!" Without a word John began the work. The stream was checked. There was a barrier to its flow and John strengthened it by more sand, by pebbles, by everything he could lay his hands on. The emergency had been met but it was by no means past. The water was chilling Abner to the bone.

"Do you think I can get up?" he asked.

"If you do she'll start again," John replied.

"Then I suppose I'll have to stay 'till somebody comes."

It was not a cheerful situation but Abner took matters as coolly as he could with cold chills chasing through every nerve and fiber. But there was no help. Even when John began work again and piled in more dirt with his hands all that he could do could not take the place of the broad back that stayed the water's flow.

"It's just this way, Abner," he said, "if you get up the dam's gone."

Abner commanded him again, "Run up to the other end and turn the water

through the mill,—not the floodgate but the old saw mill."

Off John went as fast as his fat legs could carry him. He threw the gate open, letting the water through and starting the buzz of machinery. Then as if frightened at what he had done he hurried back to the place where his luckless companion was struggling with cramps and cold chills. This time the situation seemed to impress him humorously and he asked Abner if he felt like a millionaire.

"If it's all the same to you," replied Abner, "I don't want to sit here more than a week. If you've got any sense run up to Cobb's and tell the old man if he don't hurry down and help me out I'll let his old dam go and sue him for damages to boot." Again John started, and after he had gone, for the first time Abner closed his eyes as if sinking under the strain and the cold, and he kept them closed until he thought he heard the noise of approaching footsteps. When he opened them his body moved in a sudden start that threatened the safety of the earth works which it supported. Coming towards him at full speed with hands occupied with a tin pot and cup and saucer and an umbrella was Jane Cobb.

It is curious how surprise acts upon hu-

man vanity. Abner ought to have thought of something worthy of the occasion but the truth was that the first emotion that went through him was the consciousness that he had not been shaved for three days and, worse still, that his face had not been washed nor his hair combed since the morning before. But he did not have time to dwell upon such things. She was approaching and her speed was overpowering. He had never seen her excited. She was always so calm, so self possessed. Now she was flushed and trembling. Before he could speak she began to send—between her gasps—words across the distance between them, a distance which she was quickly destroying.

"Oh, Abner, isn't it awful! You'll catch your death of cold. Father had started for the upper dam. I put John on the horse to overtake him. He'll be here soon. My! but you are brave! Isn't it cold sitting down there?"

"I've been in warmer places, but it won't hurt me. I'm never sick, you know. Why, Jane, what's that?"

She had quickly poured some coffee from the pot and handed him the cup.

"I thought you'd be awfully chilly inside," she said, "so I brought it, but I'm

afraid it's not good. I was in such a hurry that I forgot all about the sugar. Drink it right down."

She was standing at his side holding the umbrella over him—so far over him that she was not fully protecting herself.

"I'll not drink a drop," he said, "until you get under the umbrella. Don't bother about me. I'm wet anyhow."

But she did mind and although she took a step closer she did not leave him unprotected. He put the cup to his mouth and then more nervously than before she exclaimed, "Oh, wait a minute! Here are some quinine pills. Take all of them," and she poured a half dozen into his hand. Obedient to her commands, he washed them down with the coffee.

"That's the best coffee I ever drank in all my life," he said.

"Why, Abner!"

"Yes, he said, bending forward and looking up, "because you made it and because you brought it."

She gave a quick scream, "Don't move! don't move!" she exclaimed and throwing the umbrella down she jumped behind him, and with hands full of dirt repaired the little break that his movement had made. Then she took the umbrella once more and stood at his side.

"I beg your pardon. I won't do it again," he said, and he added, "Jane, you are the most thoughtful person I ever knew. At the sale you were the only one who said a kind word to me and now—"

"Do you think the water will get any higher?" she quickly asked.

"No. But I don't care—just so you are here."

"Hold the umbrella, Abner, and I'll pour you another cup of coffee. It's not very warm but it's better than nothing."

He held the umbrella over her as far as he could hold his arm and wished that his arm were longer. It was a commonplace matter—pouring a cup of coffee—but somehow as she did it Abner forgot about his unwashed and unshaven face and uncombed hair and admired the girl at his side, her graceful ways, her sweet, earnest face. It made him glad that his better intentions had conquered and that he had saved the dam, if only for a few moments of her devoted attention. When a young man feels that a good woman is regarding him as a hero, martyrdom is easy and pain is naught. Courage comes just as the flower blooms when the sun shines upon it. He felt that he might like the saving of dams as a steady occupation, provided she

would rush to his rescue. An inexpressible something surged through his heart, and in the warmth it brought, the cramps were forgotten and he was happy. He did not know what it was, but he did not know what love was, and he took the coffee as if it had been water brought down between the rain drops by an angel instead of being poured from a tin pot by a girl enveloped in a red shawl that, in all candor, was not becoming to her purple dress.

"Jane," he said, "I'll never be able to thank you for this. You are so good and kind."

He might have said more but from the distance came the sound of horses urged to their utmost speed.

* * * * *

It was true that Abner had never been ill but his experience that morning was too much even for his fine health. It was pneumonia, and for several days the doctor feared the worst. But the worst stopped at the narrow line that separates life from death and when the recession began the patient returned safely to consciousness and strength. When he came to himself—it was an afternoon when the early winter's sun was flooding the room with its warmth and beauty—he saw Jane sitting near the

open fire, busily knitting. Before he could speak she had glanced toward him and had interpreted his wondering look. She arose and went to the bedside.

"You must not talk," she said. "You are not strong enough yet. You're getting well now, you know, and the doctor said you must be quiet."

In his weakness and helplessness her domination of him seemed the sweetest tyranny he had ever known. And he smiled as a child smiles when a mother tells him that he must be a good boy.

But returning health brought its blessing speedily and then came days when he was allowed to speak, and the only sorrows of those days were the absences of Jane from the room, absences which she tried to make, which Abner with every resource at his command tried to unmake. One afternoon she had read to him and he had asked her to stop.

"I've something to say, Jane, and I'll get better faster if you'll let me say it now. I think you are the loveliest girl that ever lived in this world."

She smiled slightly but instead of replying picked up her knitting and began work. She had taken several stitches when Abner spoke again.

"Jane, I love you."

The smile went away and a warmth of sweetness and roses—of the old roses that in summer bloomed out in the yard—came into her cheeks.

"I love you so much, Jane, that if you can't love me, I don't think I care to get well."

Then the smile came back, only it was fuller and brighter now, and she turned her chair so as to face her patient.

"Abner," she said, "If a man loves anybody, do you think it's right for him to talk about it to others before he tells *her*?" and she put a significant accent on the word.

"I don't understand," he said.

"Then I'll tell you. The second day after we brought you to the house you became delirious, and got to talking about being a millionaire and—other things. I did not feel it was exactly right for me to nurse you, but father had to be away, and John didn't know one medicine from another, and we couldn't get anybody, and so it seemed that I had to do it."

This hurt Abner's pride. He wished she had explained it in some other way.

"And you began to talk about other things that I did not care for anybody else to hear, and so I sat here through the days."

"What other things, Jane?"

"Well, you went over all your plans about the store and about getting rich, and then about getting married. You wanted a room where the sun shone in, and where after you got through your work you could come and sit and watch your wife while she was knitting, and you said that you would love her more and more every day."

She suddenly changed. "Father heard you going over your plans about the store, and he thinks it's a good idea and a fine opportunity, and I rather think that when you get up he will be willing to help you. In fact, I believe John has been at work down at the cross roads getting the old house ready for you."

Abner could not find his words, his thoughts were so confused, his emotions so confusing. At last he was able to ask:

"Jane, when my mind came back, and I could see and know, were you not knitting?"

"Yes, Abner; I've been knitting nearly all the time, but—really—I had to do it. It's been so long since there has been any knitting done in the house."

* * * * *

More than a year afterwards a man came into the store and, after a few remarks on

the weather, pulled from a mysterious region of his innocent-looking coat a volume stamped in gilded letters.

"My friend," he said to John, "I want to show you a book that you need; a book that will add to the joys of life as long as you stay upon the earth."

"What is it about?"

"It tells of the happiness of married people. It is a guide to content, founded on the experience of successful matrimony. Nothing succeeds like success, and this tells all about success."

"In the first place," replied John, "I'm not the man you want, and secondly, there is just about as much happiness around this store now as we can accommodate."

“ANDY RICK’S HANDY TRICKS.”

I.

ANDREW RICK was in trouble. He was very much in trouble. The trouble was all the greater because it was such a little one. It is much easier to stop the barking of a dog than the singing of a mosquito, and Mr. Rick resented his state of mind because he knew it to be entirely unworthy of him.

It was this way. He stood at the head of his party in Quantico County. His elevation to that autocracy had been entirely creditable to his political abilities. Less than five years before, as the new sheriff, he had come to the county seat from the obscurity of Ricktown. With him he had brought Colonel Marcellus Bodson, a grey-haired partisan who, in a lifetime of office-seeking, had let his aspirations sink from Congress through all the grades of political possibility to the humble duties

of a deputy-sheriff. It was his last chance, and he took it, partly because Andrew Rick insisted, and largely because he needed the income. This was sad, because the Bodsons were people entirely unworthy of their poverty,—especially the daughter, Miss Julia Bodson.

When the bosses tried to defeat Rick, because they thought him the sort of man who could be put aside, Rick, with the active assistance of Bodson, utilized the popular sentiment against the bosses and turned the tables.

So up came Rick. It was the happiest moment of his life. He could never forget the joy that filled him when he saw himself chosen unanimously a chairman of the County Committee. He was the Clerk of the Court now, and his income was nearly four thousand dollars, and there was really no reason why the exhilaration of his first victory should not have continued. But,—there are always *buts* even in politics—it did not last. He soon found out that the throne of a boss was not an easy chair padded with roses. It had thorns. Safety, he discovered, lay in getting all he could and then getting out, and thus it was that he began to lose sleep.

Ricktown needed a railroad. For years

Andrew Rick had failed to recognize this fact, but now he saw it clearly. It needed it because it would increase the price of real estate. The fact that Andrew Rick owned a large part of this real estate may also have a parenthetical importance. To get the road, it was necessary to secure from the legislature a charter, and with it legislation authorizing Quantico county to endorse the bonds. A man must be in the legislature to work it, and therefore Erastus Crawley, a good gray patriot, who also owned Ricktown land and who was in Andrew's confidence, was nominated. Mr. Crawley professed great reluctance about accepting a place on the ticket, and Mr. Rick told the people that he appreciated Mr. Crawley's unselfishness in bowing to his party at the sacrifice of his personal preferences. The voters swallowed it all, and Mr. Crawley was elected. Everything went well, and the railroad scheme was being so quietly managed that it promised perfect success. But it so happened that the smoothness of its progress had a bad effect on the political ambitions of Mr. Crawley. He had been in office before. The school in Ricktown district needed a new teacher. In an unhappy moment Mr. Crawley told Mrs. Crawley that he could

get it for their daughter Mary. After that the idea took possession of Mrs. Crawley, mind, body and soul, and Mr. Crawley was sent off to town to see about it. He found Andrew Rick in an unguarded interval, and he went back home with the promise of the boss that his daughter Mary should have it.

This was the trouble. Ordinarily Andrew Rick could have managed it. But circumstances alter cases. Miss Julia Bodson, the daughter of Colonel Marcellus Bodson, had quietly applied for the position on her merits, without the formality of first seeing the boss. She was young and charming and gifted, and Miss Mary Crawley was not any of these. To make the case worse, Andrew's wife Jane had always been an intense admirer of Miss Bodson. When it was known that Miss Julia wanted the place, she began to talk about it and to sandwich it between the mouthfuls of Andrew's meals. This made Mr. Rick unhappy, and his appetite began to fail.

"You know, Andrew," Mrs. Rick would say, "I never bother you about offices, because I don't think women ought to have any business with politics, but I do hope you will get that school position for Julia.

She is the brightest girl in the county,—you know that,—and she needs it and everybody wants her to have it!"

That was the trouble again. Everybody did want her to have it, and he knew it.

In his way Mr. Rick was a good man. He was trusted, and his business career had been without dishonor. People said that if there was profit to be got out of anything he generally got it,—but then that was more of a merit than a failing. These same people sometimes said he was tricky in politics, but they expected that, and in a measure forgave it. A man in a rural community can do a great many things, provided his neighbors say "he is a good man in his home." This could be asserted of Andrew Rick with entire truthfulness. There was never a better husband. He delighted in making his wife happy, and whenever the conversation reached a time or subject when he could not say "yes," he generally put on his hat and took a walk.

That was why he left the house and started down town. He went at once to Paul Reed's office. Reed was his ablest lieutenant. He had come to him, so to speak, from his predecessor. He always respected him because he was one of the few men who seemed to be serving the party without wanting pay or office.

He took his usual chair, and in a few minutes conversation had drifted to the legislature.

"I see you got a favorable report on your railroad bill," said Reed. "I received a printed copy to-day. Everything is there and it is all right. When the road is built I suppose you will be getting a thousand dollars apiece for building lots carved out of that twenty-dollars-an-acre farm of yours."

Andrew laughed and said, "It's a good thing for the county, isn't it? It will add to the taxable basis, won't it?"

"Of course, of course, and incidentally it may increase the bank accounts of Andrew Rick and Erastus Crawley."

There was another laugh, but Andrew grew a little red in the face. He liked Reed, but he did wish that he would be a little less personal.

"By the way, Andrew, I wanted to see you about a matter. They are going to appoint a teacher for the Ricktown school next week, and Miss Julia Bodson wants it."

Andrew's cheerfulness sank.

"I don't suppose there'll be any trouble about it," Reed went on. "She is a charming young woman, too good by far for the

work, but I suppose she needs it, and she ought to have it. I wish you would see that it is pushed through at once."

Andrew shifted uneasily in the chair. He tried to collect himself. He waited so long that Reed asked, "You'll do it, won't you?"

Andrew stammered. "Reed," he said, "I've promised it to Crawley, for his daughter Mary."

"The devil you have!"

"I had to do it," pleaded Rick. "Crawley's wife is set on it, and unless Mary gets it I'd never hear the end of it, and Crawley wouldn't have any more peace as long as he lived."

Reed quickly comprehended the situation. He took up a paper-knife and tapped on the desk as if to emphasize his thoughts.

"Look here, Rick," he said, "you are going too far, and it's about time that one of your friends gave you a little plain advice."

Andrew looked at the young man in amazement.

"I speak plainly," continued Reed, "because you need plain speech. You are getting the idea that you are bossing this county, and are looking upon the offices as belonging to you for personal distribution. You get flattery and abuse, and you

take both as tributes to your power. You are making a mistake, and unless you draw in your reins a little you will soon reach the end of your rope."

"Reed," said Andrew, "keep your coat on and talk sense."

"Well, I will," replied Reed. "You have said once or twice lately that you're tired of putting up with Bodson. You think you have done too much for him. Now the truth is, you have used him in your work, and now that he is old and poor and is drinking more than he ought to, you want to visit all his weaknesses on his family."

"Reed, you're going too far," said Rick with emphasis as he arose. "When the place was promised to Crawley, I didn't know Julia Bodson was an applicant."

"That explains things, but it does not excuse you. You had no business to promise a school position. Such places ought to be given on merit alone."

"Oh!" exclaimed the manager, with some contempt in his voice, "you're turning civil service reformer, are you?"

"It's not a question of reform; it's a matter of justice."

"You can't run politics on theories," said Andrew, standing in front of the desk with

both hands in his trousers pockets. "You can't distribute offices like prizes in a spelling bee. You can't manage a party like a sewing society, but you can talk beautifully how the thing ought to be done and lay down opinions that are as lovely as a sixteen-year-old in a new gingham frock. I know men in this country who are not able to raise a crop of black-eyed peas, who think they can run the United States Government better than the President, the Supreme Court and Congress all put together, and believe they ought to be drawing five thousand dollars a year for sitting on goods boxes and talking about the weather. What has Bodson done for this country? What, except to swash around and speechify and get into debt? You've got to judge a man by what he's done and by what he does, and you've got to let him manage his own affairs."

"But the party's affairs are not one man's affairs."

"Yes, they are, if the party places him at the head of its management, and I defy you or anybody else to say that I have not tried to do the best I could. I'm not going to let up business principles now and run into sentiment. When I make a promise I'll stick to it, and what's more, I'm going to

depend on you to help me out. You drew up that railroad bill for us!"

"I will not help you out in this school appointment," replied Reed with considerable deliberation; "and the sooner you get old Crawley to release you from this pledge the better it will be for you and the party. As for the railroad bill, I don't care a continental whether you get it through or not."

Andrew stood in silence. He walked to the fire and meditated, and looked to the ceiling and yawned.

"Well," he said, as if tired of the conversation, "I'll see what I can do. I guess I'll go home and go to bed."

II.

THE next morning, which was Saturday, Mr. Crawley, on his way home from the legislature, which took a recess until Tuesday, called at the house of Mr. Rick. The two gentlemen went at once into executive session.

"The bill is all right," said Crawley. "I have promised to vote for things for near about everybody in the legislature, and they are going to run our railroad through in return. Politics are just about as they were twenty years ago when I was there,—the same old game of you vote for my bill and I'll vote for your bill, you tickle me and I'll tickle you."

"Don't let them put you off too long," said Mr. Rick; "their promises might not keep."

"That's all right," said Mr. Crawley, "the bill is safe."

Then Mr. Crawley moved his chair a bit closer and asked, "How about that little appointment for my daughter?"

"I don't know," said Mr. Rick ambiguously.

"Ain't it all right?"

"Yes, I think it is. But you know Julia Bodson has applied, and, to tell you the truth, she's got a mighty strong sentiment back of her."

"I don't care if she has," Mr. Crawley broke in vigorously. "You promised the place, and you've got to give it to her."

"Don't you see," expostulated Mr. Rick, "I'm doing all I can? But look here, Crawley, why can't you let her wait until the next vacancy? It's going to be a hard fight to make it this time, and she might be defeated."

Mr. Crawley gasped, as if the proposition had taken his breath away. "Great Scott, Andrew, you don't know what this means. My wife is set on it. She brings it up every time I go home. I won't get any peace until it's done. If Mary should have to give way to Julia Bodson, I'd just as well buy a lot in that cemetery which we are going to build when we get our railroad to Ricktown."

"I know all that," said Mr. Rick, "but it's a very ticklish position for me, and will be very foolish for both of us if we go to jeopardizing our railroad by a fight over a little school appointment."

"It's not that at all," said Mr. Crawley. "There isn't a bit of danger. You're just

afraid of Bodson; that's what you are. Now why don't you act sensible? Drop Bodson. You've done enough for him, and if you'll keep on trying to drag him along he's going to drag you down. He's a fool, and you know it, and since he took to drink in his old age he's worse than a fool. No man ever makes anything by backing a fool. Drop him, Andrew, drop him, and let him shift for himself."

This sounded hard. Mr. Rick felt that it was hard, but it did seem to be business-like. He had wanted to say something of the sort himself, but he couldn't do it. Now it eased his mind to know that someone else had said it for him.

Saturday was a busy day at the court house. Usually Mr. Rick had his hands full, attending to his business ventures. He left the work of the office to his deputy. Late in the afternoon he entered the office, and found Colonel Marcellus Bodson in a demoralized condition,—also the work. It made him angry. He had the ideas of a man who had prospered on temperance. He abhorred drunkenness. The more he thought about it, the worse his humor became. There was no one in the room but the two men. Mr. Rick suddenly stepped to the front of the desk on which

Colonel Bodson was resting his weary brain. In crisp, clear-cut English he told the colonel what he thought of him.

"This sort of thing must stop," he said. "For three Saturdays the books have not been kept up, and it can't go on any longer."

It required several minutes to arouse the colonel. When he did get awake, he was vigorous and belligerent.

"Then why don't you come in here and help?" he asked. "If it hadn't been for me you would never have been clerk; but I am your deputy, and therefore you must draw three thousand dollars a year, while I get a miserable six hundred dollars, and do all the work. I want you to understand that I've got as much right in this office as you have."

Mr. Rick was nettled. He turned a shade paler, and his fingers clutched nervously at the leaves of the book. He did not reply at once, for he objected to a scene. He had expected the colonel to cower at his reproof.

"If you want the books fixed, you had better help do it," added the deputy aggressively. "You haven't done an honest day's work in this office for a month."

Mr. Rick's courage was not of the phy-

sical sort. At this attack he prepared for a retreat. But before he could get himself started, Colonel Marcellus Bodson, under the stimulus of his condition, advanced again in heavier array than ever.

"I want to know," he said, "what you mean by trading a school appointment for Crawley's vote on that crooked railroad bill of yours, and cheating my daughter out of her rights?"

His voice was thick, but his anger was unmistakable. As he spoke, his clearness of mind seemed to increase. He arose and steadied himself by holding to the desk. Although physically uncertain, he was intensely in earnest.

"I am waiting for an explanation," he added with dignity.

Mr. Rick was totally unprepared for this turn in the interview. As quickly as he could, he asked the colonel to go home and come back Monday and settle it then.

"No, I won't," said the colonel. "We'll settle it now—man to man."

"Then there is only one way," exclaimed Rick, summoning all his courage. "Leave the office."

"Not before you pay me what you owe me."

"You have overdrawn your account, and I don't owe you a cent."

"You've tricked me, and used me," exclaimed Mr. Bodson, holding up his hand, "and now you want to cheat me."

"I repeat, you've overdrawn your account."

The conversation was rapid. Each was under great excitement. Suddenly Bodson plunged toward Mr. Rick. He seemed to have lost his balance, but Andrew believed it to be an intentional advance. They were near the entrance, and Mr. Rick met the movement by grasping his deputy under his arm. Before he could struggle, he pushed him out of the office and locked the door.

When Mr. Rick sat down he was trembling from his head to his feet. Perspiration was standing on his forehead. He had never been in such a mess before. He would have given a thousand dollars to be out of it then. But it was not his fault. He saw that clearly; and yet he knew people would talk.

"It's always this way," he muttered to himself. "When one thing goes wrong, everything goes wrong."

It did go wrong with a vengeance.

He looked through the side window. People were hurrying toward the front of the court house. He locked the safes, and

closed the shutters. His nerves were still rebelling, but he felt cooler when he turned the key in the door and started home.

He drew near the outer vestibule of the court house. Suddenly he saw men holding an improvised stretcher, on which was the prostrate form of Colonel Bodson, from whose face blood was flowing. Somehow his heart suddenly grew sick. Even the explanation, "The colonel fell down the steps and was stunned—that's all," did not reassure him. He offered to help, but he was not needed.

As soon as he could, he went miserably towards his home.

III.

HE entered the house, staring as if he scarcely recognized it. But when he passed on into the sitting-room, he came to himself as if from a shock.

Sitting near the window was Miss Julia Bodson, chatting with Mrs. Rick and praising the fancy work which she had just completed. Mr. Rick stammered "Good evening," but he was plainly not himself. Suddenly his wife looked up and exclaimed:

"For mercy's sake, Andrew, what ails you?"

"Nothing," he said, "only tired—nothing at all."

"I know there is," she asserted decisively. "You are as white as a ghost. You look as if you've got a chill,—doesn't he, Julia?"

"Indeed you do, Mr. Rick," said Miss Julia, "and I am afraid that Mrs. Rick will have to try her new remedy for the ague, which she has been telling me about."

Mr. Rick attempted to smile, but it was a ghastly failure.

"I must be going now," said Miss Bod-

son, "I suppose father has gone home?" This to Mr. Rick.

"Yes," said Mr. Rick, "he has gone."

She arose, and was about to say good-bye, when Mr. Rick looked at her and said, as bravely as he could:

"Miss Julia, you must not be alarmed, for it is not serious, but your father met with an accident, and—"

"How?" she asked breathlessly.

"He fell and cut himself—that's all. It was not serious."

Miss Bodson started towards the door.

"One moment, Miss Julia," said Mr. Rick. "The colonel forgot to draw his salary to-day, and may be you—I mean he'll need it. He might want some things."

"Thank you, Mr. Rick," said the girl with candor, "we shall need it. Now, good-bye."

They had not observed Mrs. Rick. She had put on her hat and shawl, and when Miss Bodson started she said:

"I am going with you, dear. Andrew, you'll find the supper on the table."

An hour afterwards Mrs. Rick returned. The supper was untouched.

"I do think that some of these town folks have the least sense of any people I ever knew," was her first sentence. "They were

crowding in that room enough to suffocate anybody, especially a man who had been in a faint. The doctors were away and it did seem that nobody understood just what ought to be done, and so I had to order them all out—all except Mr. Reed and Julia!"

"Is he much hurt?" asked Mr. Rick.

"After washing off the blood and smoothing out his hair, Mr. Reed and I got the bleeding stopped and wrapped his head up in bandages and got him to drink some hot coffee and eat a little piece of toast, and all the time he was thanking me, and I was telling him not to mind that, for his folks would be glad to do the same for us, and he said they certainly would, and—no, he ain't much hurt; he'll be all right soon."

Sunday and Monday were days of torture to Mr. Rick. It was noised around that there had been a fight between the two men, that Colonel Bodson had been discharged and knocked down; all sorts of rumors were flying over the town and through the county. Mr. Rick refused to discuss the matter, except to deny that there had been any physical difficulty. To his callers Col. Bodson stated that the differences between Mr. Rick and himself

were purely personal, but that they were of such a nature that he would not return to his duties as deputy-clerk.

Early Tuesday morning Mr. Rick met Mr. Crawley. The Honorable Erastus was on his way to a train that would take him to the State capital.

"You are the very man I want to see," he exclaimed. "What's all this I hear about Bodson? Discharged, is he? What in tarnation were you thinking about, to quarrel with him now?"

"Why, Erastus," gasped Andrew, "you were the very one to tell me to do it."

"Consarn it all," replied the old man hotly, "there are more ways of getting a man out of your house than kicking him down the steps."

"I didn't kick him," retorted Mr. Rick, warming up. "I didn't even discharge him. He discharged himself."

"It's all the same. Why did you let him do it? You know that bill comes to a vote to-morrow, and you'll bust up everything. Why in thunder didn't you make him hold on?"

Mr. Rick was exceedingly wroth, but the ruling passion was still strong. "You attend to the bill," he said "and I'll attend to this."

Mr. Crawley was in a hurry, but he tarried long enough to add with great earnestness, "For the Lord's sake, fix it up somehow!"

Whatever his other faults may have been, Mr. Rick was a man of action. He took the dilemma by the horns. He went to see Mr. Reed. He no longer dictated; he entreated.

"Paul," he said, with unwonted humility, "if you will get me out of this, there isn't anything in the world that I won't do for you."

"All right," replied Reed, "get out of it."

"But how?"

"Ask the commissioners to vote for Miss Bodson, and invite the Colonel to come back into your office."

"You know that I can't do that. I've promised Crawley, and I must keep my word. Colonel Bodson is welcome to take his place again, but the school position—"

"Well," interrupted Reed, "I'm just revising a nice little editorial that is to come out in the *Quantico Weekly* the morning the commissioners meet to elect a teacher. I happen to own a large part of that great organ of public opinion. Here it is. It is headed 'Andy Rick's Handy Tricks,' and it is full of salt for your wounds."

Mr. Rick took the proof and slowly read it, as if it were a death sentence.

"You wouldn't do that?" he implored.

"Oh, yes, I will, unless you agree to certain things. When is that bill to be voted on?"

"Crawley said he'd get it through to-morrow."

"How is your health?"

"All right."

"There is where I differ from you. It seems to me that you are going to be ill for a few days. Do you feel any symptoms?"

Something began to dawn on the mind of Rick, and he said he didn't know; he was not positive either way.

"Well, you do look as if you need rest. You will therefore please get sick to-night, and be sure that you do not show yourself until Sunday morning. In the meanwhile it will be well for you not to hinder your convalescence by thinking of school appointments."

"Reed, you don't intend—"

"Never mind what I intend. I'll save you if you'll do as I say; but if you don't get sick and stay sick, 'Andy Rick's Handy Tricks' goes into the *Quantico Weekly Saturday morning*."

Mr. Rick did not arise from his bed the next morning, and his indisposition continued throughout the day. Late in the evening a telegram came announcing the passage of the railroad bill. He felt like celebrating, but it was out of the question. Then came the hardest part of it all—the enforced confinement during the rest of the week.

"I hardly know what's the matter with Andrew," said Mrs. Rick to Miss Julia Bodson, who had called to inquire about him, bringing with her a dainty pudding for the invalid. "Sometimes I think it's his liver, and then again I believe it's nervous prostration. He says all he needs is rest, but the doctor has given him a lot of medicine which seems to be doing him good."

Not even the artless Jane knew that the medicine was promptly administered out of the window; and the old gardener who found a lot of pills on the ground is still speculating as to what variety of seed they are.

IV.

SATURDAY came. The contest was to be settled :nd the contestants were in town. With Mr. and Mrs. Crawley was Miss Mary in a new dress, tight shoes and abundant ribbons. She was trembling in the expectation of the honor. Mr. Crawley rushed to the house of Mr. Rick, but was informed that he could not be seen. He came back mumbling words with the odor of brimstone.

The commissioners met. Paul Reed was there. The first vote taken resulted in four for Miss Julia Bodson and one for Miss Mary Crawley. Just after the election was announced a letter was sent to the board, and in it Miss Bodson thanked the gentlemen for their kindness and regretted extremely that the circumstances were such that she could not accept the honor. Then, the election of Miss Mary Crawley followed.

Reed went up to explain matters to the invalid. "It was this way," he said, "Miss Bodson applied for the school place before I asked her to be my wife, and as long as she had applied she was too proud to

be defeated, and I honor her for it and did all I could to help her cause. Andrew, I'm glad to see you looking so much better."

"I knew all along," put in Mrs. Rick. "that when you got to fighting for Julia, it would turn out this way. You couldn't help falling in love with her. I must say that I'm glad that both of you had pride enough to make her win. But, my! Wasn't old Mrs. Crawley as mad as a hornet, to think that a Bodson had beaten a Crawley, even though Mary did get the place!"

Later in the evening Andrew grew strong enough to dress himself and go down-stairs. He picked up the *Quantico Weekly*. There was no editorial in it on "Andy Rick's Handy Tricks."

PROFESSOR WINTERS.

NEAR the front of the hall was a large tree, and under it a group of seniors had lingered after the recitation. The day's work was over, and there was none of the rush of the earlier hours. They had gossiped a few minutes, when a tall, smooth-faced gentleman emerged from the building and sauntered coolly by.

"Good afternoon, Professor."

"Good afternoon, gentlemen."

He bowed his head slightly as he spoke, in acknowledgment of the salutation, but showed no emotion in the formality. His placid face seemed fixed in an expression of exact complacency. It was hard to analyze it, but if there was anything in it of a characteristic sort it was a hazy suggestion of a far-away smile, a kind of skeptical appreciation of the humorous absurdity of life and living. The man himself did not walk, in the proper meaning of the word. He moved as if propelled by an interior machine that had been well oiled and that did its work in its own peculiar way.

When he passed it was an easy matter for the gossips to take up his name and sport with it.

"I wonder," said Ohio, "if Professor Winters ever had an emotion beyond a placid smile, and—"

"A smile is not an emotion, it is an expression," interrupted Pennsylvania.

"I think that he has," put in New York, seriously. "I believe he is a man of deep feeling, only he does not show it."

"And now is the Winters of our discontent made glorious summer by this Duke of York, or words to that effect," said Ohio, and the group smiled obligingly.

"All the same," said New York again, "I believe that Winters is a man of more heart than any of you give him credit for."

"Oh, come, now," interrupted Ohio, "don't be ridiculous. Old Winters probably has an anatomical mainspring that he winds once a week, or he may have a storage battery that he charges every ten days, but it is all bosh to say he has such a thing in him as a heart."

"I was not speculating," said New York, "but was speaking from experience. I went to him the other day on a little matter on which I wanted some impartial advice, and he gave me just the assistance I needed, and

I came away stronger for having gone. He is a gentleman and a scholar, all wool and a yard or so wide."

A young man, tall and dark-haired, strong of limb, with melancholy, clear-cut features, which are oftenest called classic, had listened to the conversation with increasing interest. When he heard this last sentence he moved off and sauntered down the grove in the direction the professor had taken. He looked as if he was trying to solve a doubt; then he seemed to pull himself together more vigorously and swung out his arms and went forward in a brisk walk.

In five minutes he was at the residence of Professor Winters. He found the professor at home. Knowing that Mr. Winters was one of the most industrious men of the faculty, and, in addition to his large work, a constant contributor to periodicals and a rapid worker in everything he undertook, it seemed strange to find such perfect system in the working-room, and it increased the impression that Professor Winters was a higher development of a human machine in which ordinary emotions and weaknesses had no place. The professor turned from his desk by the window and asked his visitor to be seated.

"This is Mr. Hall, of the senior class, I believe."

The young man bowed, paused a moment after sitting down, and then, in a clear, straightforward voice, said, "Professor, I have come to you for some advice. I am very anxious to finish my course and get my degree, but there are certain circumstances at home which make it doubtful, if not impossible. The trouble is a lack of finances. I do not think my father will be able to keep me here another term. I have no resources of my own, nor do I know of any one to whom I could apply, and I came to ask you if you will suggest to me any way by which I may earn enough to graduate. I came to you because I thought you would give me practical advice and not because I wished any sympathy."

As soon as the last six words had been uttered Hall would have given anything to recall them, but it was too late, and the professor was smiling as if appreciating them.

"Perhaps," he said, "you are one of those who believe that sympathy is the weakness of women and the luxury of the rich."

"Oh, no, not at all," replied Hall. "I think it is sometimes very manly and often

very strengthening, but in a case of dollars and cents it is rather—rather——”

“Inadequate.”

“Thank you. It doesn’t give one enough to stand on and just now I need something solid.”

“Well, we will eliminate sympathy as a factor in the problem; but you will let me say that I think it would be a great pity for you to be obliged to give up at this time when your chances seem so excellent. In the first place, are you sure that your father will not be able to bear the expenses of the remainder of the term? They will not be heavy.”

“He has not said so, but I am expecting every day to hear it. My sister has had to give up her school position in order to nurse those at home, and I know that father has debts to meet. I have tried to do something in the way of writing, but my articles will not be paid for until they are published.”

The professor smiled. “We will also eliminate that. Have you thought of anything else?”

“It seems to me that I have thought of everything, and—nothing.”

“Could you not borrow enough from some of your friends at home? You will soon be able to pay it back.”

"I know of no one, and besides that, my father, as I said before, has debts which must be met. He has sacrificed and the family have sacrificed comforts to keep me here, and since the fever came in the house I know that they need every cent of the income, which is not large in such a place as Waverly."

"Waverly? By the way, is my old friend Pindar there now?"

"Yes, sir. He is at the head of the high school."

"I cannot understand Pindar. He was the brightest man of our class, and yet he buries himself in a town."

"Waverly is a pleasant place to be buried in," said Hall loyally, but somewhat ambiguously.

"Doubtless it is; but a man of his ability has no right to bury himself anywhere. It seems to me that Pindar ought to be willing to help you out."

"There are certain circumstances that make this impossible," said Hall, coloring a little.

"As I understand it, then," continued the professor, "you are not absolutely sure that you cannot stay here. That being the case, my advice to you is to wait until you hear something definite from your father.

You naturally feel sorry that your family is making certain sacrifices for you, but you should remember that you will be able to doubly repay all that has been done if you are graduated and do as well as your career here promises."

"Thank you, Professor," said Hall, as he arose.

"Suppose you let me know as soon as you do hear."

"I will, with pleasure, and I thank you again."

Before Hall had gone out of the room the professor had returned to his work, and as the young man glanced back through the closing door he saw him writing away as if nothing had interrupted his labors.

Hall carried a very heavy heart that week. He saw Professor Winters in the recitation-room, and late Friday afternoon he saw him going toward the station with a satchel, but he had no conversation with him. The letters from home were brief bulletins of the condition of the sick. "As to that other matter, my son," said a postscript, "I cannot tell until next week."

Monday arrived, and with it the resumption of the routine.

Tuesday morning Professor Winters had a visitor.

"You must pardon me," said Hall. "I received a letter in the early mail, and the news was so good that I had to come to tell you. It's all right. I can finish my course."

"I am very glad to hear it," said the professor.

Hall's joy was too great, apparently, to be subdued by the impervious tranquillity of Mr. Winters. In his enthusiasm he pulled out the letter.

"You must let me read what father writes," he said. "It seems to me, my son, that Providence has a way of stepping in just when hope seems well-nigh hopeless, and of making all things right. How it happened or who was the instrument of it, I do not know and cannot tell, but the matters which pressed most have been lifted and you can finish your course.' And look, Professor, at this postscript!—it is by my sister—'It has done us more good than all the doctors and all the medicines. God bless you!'"

The professor's composure was lightened by an indefinite smile, and he repeated, "I am very glad to hear it."

"I thought you would be, and that's why I came to tell you," replied Hall.

"If you will wait a moment I will walk over to the hall with you," said the professor.

As they went Professor Winters questioned Hall as to his plans after graduation. "I have only one suggestion to make," he said, as they were parting, "and that is do not decide too hastily. Do not commit yourself to a place when better opportunities may occur. If you come to me before you decide I shall be glad to do what I can to help you."

Hall thanked him and said that he would follow his advice.

* * * *

There was the usual scene on commencement-day—crowds of pretty girls in summer dresses showering smiles and compliments on restless young men; groups of proud parents trying to feel comfortable, and some of them feeling very uncomfortable in the effort; assortments of styles and faces from the four points of the compass; professors unbending their dignity and condescending to anecdote and repartee; flowers for the favorites, and general impatience to do and to see and to hear, and to have it all over with and rush away to dinner—with bright words for everybody, a little gossip in the corners,

and a plenty of romance under the trees, and the whispering of vows that were to be forgotten before the summer flirtations reached the middle of August.

In the audience everybody was nervous to see, and on the stage everybody was nervous about being seen. Each actor in the little drama of the day had his admirers, and everybody but the garrulous old graduate who had come back to find that he antedated modern history had somebody to love a little bit and to applaud very much.

Most of them looked at Professor Winters, who had leaped higher into fame because he had been selected to fill the presidency of a rich university which a Western plutocrat had established; but they could not get up much enthusiasm for him because, as one of them expressed it, he was "enveloped too heavily in his own refrigeration."

And, after all, a professor isn't much on commencement-day, except as a figure on the platform to fill up the background. Moreover, the proceedings had begun, and as the orators one by one went through their greatest efforts they were the heroes, and they got the applause and the attention and the flowers. The proceedings moved,

as all commencement proceedings do, with a sublime disregard of the hardness of the benches or of the flight of time. And when they were nearing the conclusion, everybody was intellectually gorged and otherwise hungry.

But when the valedictory was reached most of them forgot their hunger, or pretended that they did, and welcomed the tall young man with the classic face most heartily.

Everybody, too, seemed to applaud—everybody but an old gentleman and a young lady who sat beside him, whose delinquency was fully made up by a well-conditioned man sitting next to them, who clapped his fat hands until his face was beaded with perspiration.

Henry Hall was such a fine fellow, and had won the valedictory honors so well, that all his classmates indorsed his fame; and as he stood before the audience, graceful and self-possessed, the demonstrations were really fine. He saw his father settle himself for the test; he saw his sister bend forward as if wanting to inspire him for his ordeal, and he read in the genial face of Professor Pindar something which appeared to say, "My boy, the Waverly High School is with you."

And then, when the quiet came, he began. His oration was on "Optimism as a Force of Civilization." He spoke well. In a minute he said something that brought forth a ripple of applause. This gave him confidence, and the confidence was increased when he saw that he had the complete attention of his audience. He continued admirably. The next applause was more general and more generous, and it got better all along. The points in his address were well placed, and each one scored. When he closed, the assemblage responded beautifully, giving him a demonstration that eclipsed anything of the day.

The little group was happy. Professor Pindar beamed like an aurora borealis. Miss Hall was pale at the beginning, but when the applause sealed her brother's triumph she turned to her father with a big red spot in each cheek and a moist uneasiness around her eyes, and the Rev. Dr. Hall, not trusting to speech, let his big hand fall at his side, where it clasped a smaller hand in an expression of joy that meant more than all the syllables in the language.

When the benediction was pronounced and the band began to play, the group, led by Professor Pindar, made their way to the

stage. Henry Hall met them, and Professor Pindar, slapping him on the back and exclaiming "Good boy," kept on until he laid his hand on the shoulder of his old classmate.

"Winters," he said, "I want you," and before Winters could object he was pulled along and brought face to face with the group.

"Dr. Hall—Professor Winters. Miss Hall—Professor Winters," and as Professor Winters bowed Pindar continued, "You are going to dine with us. You promised, you know. We positively won't eat without you, and I am as hungry as a menagerie.

"Well," replied Professor Winters, "as I have an appointment with Mr. Hall I shall be glad to go with you, provided you let us two walk together and get our talk over before the festivities begin." It was agreed, and off they started.

The party had a table to themselves. Pindar presided, and somehow in the arrangement of the guests, which was no arrangement at all beyond the accidental taking of seats, Professor Winters and Miss Hall were in conversational proximity. Compliments and congratulations were heaped upon the graduate until his

blushes threatened to take away his appetite.

"It's the same old thing, this commencement experience," said Pindar; "the same old thing, except new faces and new fashions."

"And yet it always has a fresh interest," said Dr. Hall. "A commencement is more than anything else an epoch in life—about the only epoch that some of us have. All the other things are incidents."

"Of course," Professor Winters was saying to Miss Hall, "I shall be sorry to leave. It has been pleasant here, and one gets attached to a place, even when its personnel is constantly changing. A college is something like a great big mill, that grinds out graduates, but the miller and the assistant millers love the mill even though the grist is constantly going away."

Pindar said something about chaff, but it made no impression, because Miss Hall was speaking.

"I know that Henry will be sorry to part with you," she said, "for he has mentioned you so often in his letters that we all felt as if we were acquainted with you."

Henry and the professor exchanged glances and smiled, and when the smile seemed to beget an air of mystery Henry ended it by saying:

"Professor Winters has offered me a position in his new university—an under-professorship."

Then there were volleys of questions and replies, and when Henry said, "Yes, I have accepted," Pindar spread out his hands and exclaimed, "Bless you, my children!" Then, leaning his elbows on the table, which he should not have done, he interlocked his fingers, and continued with unnatural seriousness:

"There are secrets that should be kept forever inviolable, and there are secrets that outlive the rights of secrecy. Perhaps you folks did not know that a certain pedagogue named Winters surreptitiously came to Waverly about five months ago and did certain things that enabled a certain young man to graduate. Of course I promised him never to tell, but what's a promise among friends?"

"Pindar," said Winters, "you are a traitor."

The effect was peculiar. Dr. Hall laid down his fork and gazed at the professor. Henry Hall blushed still more deeply, and Miss Hall's eyes filled up again with the moist uneasiness, but something was added to it.

In the conversation which followed Winters ruined the reputation of a lifetime. He lost his composure entirely.

"Now, please don't thank me," he said, nervously. "It was a small matter—simply taking up a note and waiting a few months longer for payment. I was selfish about it. I saw Mr. Hall's ability, and I wanted him to go with me in our new university. I'll take him for security—and really I must soon be going; and, Miss Hall, if you are ready I'll be very glad to show you the buildings."

* * * * *

In the last week in August, Ohio, Pennsylvania and New York sat smoking on the veranda of a hotel in the Adirondacks. They had met that day after spending the summer at various resorts. When the talk drifted back to college days, Ohio remarked:

"I see that Winters is getting a strong faculty for his new university. By the way"—this to New York—"did you ever find out whether or not Winters really had a heart?"

"I think," replied New York, "that you had better ask Hall's sister."

"You don't mean—"

"Yes, I do mean it, and it's a very funny

story. I passed through Waverly a few weeks ago on a coaching trip and was told all about it. Winters has an old classmate there who was courting Miss Hall with a great deal of industry. Well, Winters made him a visit and cut him out. It was a pretty mean thing to do, and it proved to me that while Winters may have a heart he has no soul. No man with a soul could play such a trick on a friend."

AN OFFENSIVE PARTISAN.

WHEN the Hon. Warwick Jones drove over from the county-seat to Forkbridge district and offered Stephen Booz the nomination for Sheriff, Mr. Booz said, frankly, that he did not want it.

"That's all very well," replied Mr. Jones, "but you've got to take it. We've been running things a little too strong for the people, and that independent movement is getting dangerous. The other districts are going to give us a hard pull, and Forkbridge's majority must be our salvation. The folks around here have confidence in you, and your name will carry the ticket through. We can't help what you wish; you've got to take it."

"But the expense—"

"Oh, that's all right. You don't want to spend your money? Very well. I'll get enough out of the others to supply you."

"How much?"

"Will a thousand do?"

"Better make it two. And look here—if I go on the ticket, not a soul is to know

about my consent until I give it. Fix it up yourself, and give me the time to straighten out a few things."

So it was settled. The Hon. Warwick Jones drove back home, and told the two men associated with him in the ring the results of his visit. "It will cost us about fifteen hundred dollars," he said, "and at least half of it will go into old Booz's pocket; but we've got to do it or be whipped."

* * * * *

Mr. Booz was not new in politics, although his name had never been on a ticket. Early in his experience he had found out that the man who handled the finances had a safer and surer way of making money than the man who ran for office. This fact was impressed upon his mind by the prosperity of the bosses and the chronic bankruptcy of the candidates. So when he plunged into affairs of state it was as a district manager, and not as a party champion. His partisanship had a financial value, and it was chiefly for the finances that he was a partisan, his idea of political economy being entirely personal.

And yet he was a man of decided influence. He knew the people—knew their weaknesses. He had their confidence, be-

cause he always paid his debts; he lived plainly and well, and he put on no unnecessary airs. To Mr. Booz, open irregularity of any kind was worse than criminal—it was foolish; but quiet cunning was another thing.

Mr. Booz's political education had taught him that a thorough preparation was worth a year of open campaigning. Thus he began at once.

Sunday came. He had heard that an appeal was to be made to pay off part of the church debt. He was promptly on hand with a pleasant salutation for everybody. It was a plain rural congregation, in a region uncontaminated by railroads and the larger accessories of civilization. The minister got only four hundred dollars a year, and the church finances were correspondingly modest.

Just after the sermon a request was made for one hundred dollars. As usual, two of the members were asked to take up the contributions. Results came tardily but gradually the items added up to about sixty dollars.

Here was Booz's opportunity. Beckoning to one of the solicitors, he said, in a whisper which was quite distinct to those near him, "Put me down for forty dollars."

This gave great satisfaction.

At the end of the service the minister came down from the pulpit, shook hands with his people, and finally reached Mr. Booz.

"Brother Booz," he said, "I'm glad to see you here, sir—very glad to see you, sir, and I want to thank you for your generosity."

"Not generosity, my dear sir," said Mr. Booz, cheerily, "but duty, plain duty. I don't come to hear your fine sermons as often as I ought, and when I do come it is right for me to make up a little for my deficiency, especially when you and your church are doing such good work for us. In fact, I don't know of a country church anywhere that could give us more interesting services or a better congregation than we have had to-day."

All this fell into fruitful soil, and at every dinner that day the name of Booz got its meed of praise.

Two days afterward Mr. Booz, while driving along the road, met Rev. Josiah Brown, the pastor of the colored church.

"Good-morning, Mr. Booz."

"Good-morning, Mr. Brown. How are you getting along at your church?"

"Slowly, sir, slowly. The people hev no money scarcely, and it's hard to make both

ends meet. We wanted to fix up the church, but I guess we'll hev to wait till times gits better."

"That's bad, very bad. I don't like to see a useful man like you hampered in that way. I suppose twenty dollars wouldn't help you much, would it?"

"Twenty dollars! 'Deed it would, sir—'deed it would."

"Well, now, if you will just take the money and go ahead, and not mind about where it came from, I'll be glad to give it to such a good cause."

Rev. Mr. Brown was profuse—yes, superabundant in his thanks. The two crisp ten-dollar notes made his face look ten years younger. Booz knew perfectly well that what he said about not being known in the matter would give an impetus to the spreading of his name in a quiet and effective way. If anything will set the average negro talking, it is a half-secret.

That night Mr. Booz had eaten his supper, and was enjoying his pipe on the porch. Suddenly he looked up and said to his wife, the faithful, industrious helpmate whose management had enabled him to become a self-made man:

"Miranda, you were talking some time ago of having the folks here?"

"Yes, Stephen; but you said it would be too much trouble."

"Did I? Well, I guess I was wrong. Suppose you do it. I believe I would enjoy it myself. And, Miranda, while you are about it, why not make it a nice affair? Get all the folks here, young and old. We're travelling along in life, and I don't see why we shouldn't celebrate a little, and show our friends that we are glad to see them."

"I declare, Stephen, you're getting real sensible."

"Oh, I showed that a good while ago."

"I'd like to know when?"

"When I married you, of course. And, Miranda, that knot was tied twenty-five years ago this Wednesday two weeks. It's been so pleasant, let's have it tied over again, and invite the people to see it done."

* * * * *

These little ripples in the uneventful life of Forkbridge district had a decided effect upon the reputation of Mr. Booz. His name had always been respected; now it was becoming popular.

A week after the silver wedding anniversary, which the correspondent of the county paper described as "the grandest society event Forkbridge district had

known for years," the convention met in the court-house at Quantico. It was about fifteen miles from Forkbridge, the modest metropolis of Forkbridge district, and Forkbridge was just a mile from the Booz farm.

Mr. Booz knew that the news of the convention's work would reach the village shortly after supper. He had eaten his evening meal, and was standing at the front gate.

"Miranda," he said, "I am going down to the store to get a new bridle strap. Any errands you want?"

"Not that I know of."

He walked slowly at first; then quickened his step; then slowed up again as he neared the village. He went at once to the store, and began to make his purchase and talk about the weather and the crops.

Suddenly the rumbling of wheels was heard, and in a minute more one of the delegates to the convention had drawn up his team in front of the store.

"What's the news?" asked several at once.

The delegate descended from the carriage as if he had a message from the President, and in self-important tones announced, "They've nominated Stephen Booz for Sheriff."

"They've done what?" demanded Booz, appearing at the door.

"They've nominated you for Sheriff."

"Get out!"

"It's a fact. Nominated you unanimously."

"Well, well," says Booz, musingly, "if this don't beat creation! I know it's a big honor, gentlemen, but it's such a surprise that I don't know what to say. Seems to me, though, they'll have to get somebody else."

To this there were general protests, and amid them Mr. Booz, wearing an expression of troubled indecision, started home. The news had quickly spread, and he met several people on his way. The greetings with each were about the same.

"I see they've nominated you for Sheriff?"

"Yes, yes. But if I'd know'd they were going to do it, I'd stopped the whole thing."

"Won't you accept?"

"That depends—that depends."

When he reached home, Miranda asked the old question so familiar in the country:

"What's the news?"

"Bad news."

"What?"

"They've nominated me for Sheriff."

Mrs. Booz, with all her practical mind, was a woman of ambition. She sighed for the experience of town life, and this longing had been intensified by the social success of the wedding anniversary.

"Bad news?" she exclaimed. "Well, I guess not, and if you don't take it, there'll be trouble in this family."

* * * * *

The contest in the district was undoubtedly to hinge on the temperance question.

Michael Cassin's liquor store in Forkbridge had done great injury. Cassin was a man whose moral record was worse than his whiskey, if such a thing were possible. He was a drunkard himself, and he encouraged drunkenness. His miserable saloon became the one foul blot upon the reputation of the neighborhood. But a man seldom gets too low to wield a certain influence. It was so in Cassin's case. He had a strength among the rough elements of the population that made his assistance desirable in a political contest. On the other hand, the decent people had decided to make a plain fight against him, and determined to vote for no one who did not say that he would favor local option and temperance reform in the district.

The leader of the temperance party was John Canton, an old man, who was so good and so earnest that he never knew how to be politic or suspicious.

Booz knew Canton well, and to his house he made a visit. They talked about neighborhood topics for a while, until Mr. Canton remarked, "I see they've nominated you for Sheriff?"

"Yes," was the reply, "they have, but why in the world they did it I don't know; I'm too settled down to go to running into politics, and yet people come nagging at me to accept. Now, Mr. Canton, I want to ask a favor of you; I want you to tell me just what to do. Ought I to take it or not? You know how I stand, and how I feel about the interests of this district, and there is nobody whose opinion I'd rather have than yours."

Mr. Canton stroked his white beard meditatively, felt flattered at being approached in such a way, and finally said, "Brother Booz, I think you owe it to your district to accept."

When Mr. Booz passed down the road on his way home there was a smile on his face. He did not smile often, and when he did smile it meant something.

The next day, just after twilight, Booz

and Cassin met at an obscure fence-corner just outside the village. They talked low and earnestly.

"Cassin," said Booz, "I must depend on you again, and you'll be paid for it better than ever; but don't talk too friendly about me; don't let the temperance people have a chance to think I ain't for them and against you. Just get your boys all right, and make them keep their mouths shut. You understand?"

"Yes, Mr. Booz, I'll do it."

"And look here, Cassin, you're patronizing your own bar too much. Don't make a fool of yourself."

Mr. Booz found it convenient to have some important business to transact at Quantico, a ruse for a conference with the Hon. Warwick Jones. He drifted into Mr. Jones' office as if it were an accident, but just as soon as the doors were closed the real business began. Mr. Jones gave him a thousand dollars in cash, with a promise of five hundred more in two weeks.

"I suppose you know," said Mr. Jones, after he had handed him the money, "that the other side has endorsed young Madison for re-election?"

"So I heard."

"Well, he must be defeated. We've got to down him if we lose half of our ticket,

but we want to do it without losing any of it. You see, he has made the best State's Attorney we have ever had, and he is growing so confoundedly strong with the people that we must head him off, or he and his independent following will run away with us. I hear he is mighty popular in your district because he prosecuted the liquor people?"

"Yes; they think right smart of him up there."

"And I hear that the temperance question is going to play the devil with you this fall?"

"It'll try, but politics ain't a monopoly. Two can play at it."

"That's the point, and when you play I want you to win. Now," after a pause, "how will you manage it?"

"Leave it to me. I'll go home and look over the ground, and"—holding up the thousand dollars—"place this fertilizer where it will grow the biggest crop."

Booz went home, but the more he looked over the ground, the worse he liked it. Mike Cassin's store was an argument too big for him to get over. He could not denounce it openly, because he depended upon Cassin's assistance. The best thing he could do was to preserve an uncomfortable

neutrality. And everybody knows what lukewarmness is in a temperance fight.

At first the people were surprised, then suspicious, and finally critical.

The decent sentiment was rapidly consolidating, and it all favored Madison.

Henry Madison was an excellent specimen of young manhood, a handsome, vigorous fellow, with a sterling integrity that had been tried and proven. As the prosecuting attorney he had done more to punish rascality in the county than any three of his predecessors. He had been particularly severe on violations of the liquor laws, and the people believed in him. "Our hopes of purifying this district," said Mr. Canton, "depend on Mr. Madison's re-election."

Booz knew that something had to be done, and done quickly, but he saw no solution for his dilemma.

A severe case of blues was the consequence. He walked up and down the floor of his room. Occasionally he stepped to the window to look out and see if some kind angel would be good enough to give him an idea.

While he was thinking and gazing, an extraordinary incident took place. Two young men approached the house and ling-

ered under his window. He recognized them. One was his son, John Booz, as harum-scarum a fellow as the county contained, who more than made up for all the staidness of his parents. The other was Joseph Hendrow, the hired man, and the companion of John in all his adventures. These two boys—they were boys of over twenty years—were practical jokers, and nothing was too extravagant for their mischief-making. On this occasion Mr. Booz could see by the moonlight that they were striving to stifle their laughter. Then they began to talk, and Mr. Booz caught such fragments as these:

“It’ll scare him to death.”

“I’m ‘most sorry we did it. Come to think it all over, it’s a solemn thing playing with a corpse that way.”

“Yes, it is. But old Cassin ruined him, and he always said he’d haunt Cassin.”

Mr. Booz was now filled with curiosity. He slipped quietly down-stairs, and appearing suddenly before the boys, demanded, “What have you two fellows been doing?”

They faltered at first, but finally told their story.

The two roisterers and Jim Barnes, a boy of sixteen who lived on the adjoining

farm, had found the corpse of "Catfish Bob," the meanest and ugliest tramp in the district. When a young man, Bob had been brought from the city to Forkbridge. He was a good worker, and he accumulated some money, but Cassin put out his snares and lured him to his den. He rapidly became a drunken loafer. From loafing he drifted into thieving, and he combined the vices so well that he was never sober except when in jail, and was never out of jail except through a miscarriage of justice. Everybody considered him a nuisance, and only two days before, Cassin had told him never to come into his place again under penalty of a thrashing. When the boys found Bob's corpse it was cold. Twilight was deepening into darkness, and as they discussed what to do with it a sudden mischief seized them. They would take the body and palm it off in some way on Cassin. He had caused the wreck of Bob's life; that wreck should now haunt his conscience, if conscience he had. One of the boys went to the saloon—it was on the edge of the village, near the woods in which the corpse was found—to see what could be done.

He found Cassin just drunk enough to be surly, and no one else in sight.

He drew Cassin to the other side of the house and talked with him, while the other two boys slipped the corpse into the saloon, and set it up in the darkest corner. Then Cassin was called, and with as much art as they could bring into play they made it appear that the stranger had invited them to join him in a drink. A glass was passed to the corpse, and quietly drained, and while Cassin was replacing the bottle the corpse was rearranged. Then with ostentatious good-byes they left Cassin alone with the mysterious stranger. Jim Barnes, however, remained to watch developments, and they were now waiting for his appearance.

At first Mr. Booz was too much astonished by the story to say anything, but at last he stammered out: "Boys, you ought to be cowhided. It's awful. Suppose the shock kills Cassin?"

The boys began to be frightened but just then Jim Barnes came running up the lane. His breath was short, but between gasps he blurted out: "About five minutes after you left, old Cassin asked the fellow if he was going to pay up. No answer. Then he asked again. No answer. Then Cassin told him if he didn't settle he would come over and shake it out of him. No answer.

'I'll make you talk,' says Cassin. No answer again. Then Cassin walked around and struck a match, and saw it was Bob. Well, he fired up like gunpowder, and pitched right on him. 'Didn't I tell you not to come here no more?' he bawled, and then, cursing and swearing, he hit him, knocked him over, and kicked him toward the door. Cassin waited a while for Bob to get up, but of course he didn't. Bob was laying flat on his back. Cassin lit a match and held it over Bob's face, and when he saw that he was dead he jumped back as if he had been shot. I had enough, and I left."

"Boys," said Mr. Booz, "this is a dangerous piece of business, and I warn you not to say a word about it to anybody. Mind, not a word."

* * * * *

Mr. Booz walked around the corner of the house with his head bowed deep in thought. Unconsciously he took the little path that led to the yard gate, and he was suddenly awakened from his abstraction by a click of the latch and the whisper of a hoarse voice.

"Mr. Booz, I want to see you."

"Why, Cassin, is that you? What's the matter?"

"I'm in trouble. Can you walk down the road with me a piece? I don't want to go in-doors."

They walked in silence for a minute, and then Booz asked him to tell his story.

"Mr. Booz, I'm afraid I've killed that tramp Bob. But it was in self-defence; it was in self-defence; I swear it was."

Booz always let the other man speak first. He reserved his opinions and conclusions. His idea now was to let Cassin tell his story, and then to exculpate him of any guilt in the matter; but as soon as he saw what a brilliant lie Cassin was concocting, he determined to encourage it to the end.

"How did it happen?" he asked.

"You know, sir, that I told him not to come in my place again. But he did come, and he ordered drinks and wouldn't pay for them, and when I tried to make him pay, he grabbed up an axe and said he would split my head open."

This was too much even for Booz. He gasped audibly.

"Did you say anything, sir?"

"No. Go on."

"I watched my chance and hit him, and then I waited for him to git up; but he didn't git up, and when I looked at him

close he was dead. Oh, sir, what must I do?"

Booz's sympathy had gradually oozed out under the pressure of Cassin's mendacity. In its stead a brilliant idea came.

"Cassin," said he, "wasn't it you who taught Bob to drink?"

"Yes, sir; I guess I did, but—but I never killed anybody before."

"No, not right at once. You generally poison them with that whiskey of yours. Now, Cassin, who was present when this affair took place?"

"Nobody but us two, sir. Your boys and Jim Barnes was there just before, but they left, and we was alone together."

"That's bad—very bad."

"Bad? How, sir?"

"Simply this, Cassin. People won't believe your testimony. They are down on you here. You're a bad character."

"I know it, Mr. Booz—I know it; but I never killed anybody before."

"But your whiskey has."

The fellow's anxiety was becoming intense.

"Tell me, Mr. Booz, what to do. I've served you. Please don't turn your back on me now."

"Cassin, my advice to you is to leave this neighborhood, and leave it for good. I'll buy your place and pay you in cash."

"But if they discover—"

"Leave that to me. What if those boys should swear that they found that corpse in the woods and carried it in your house? Do you understand?"

Cassin understood, and his gratitude was almost pathetic. The two men went back to the house. The deed for the saloon was drawn up and the money was paid. Of course Booz got a bargain; he always did; but justice compels the admission that he paid a hundred dollars more than Cassin asked, simply because the saloon-keeper, in his fear and remorse, offered the property at half its value, and Booz's conscience, tough as it was, couldn't go quite that far, especially when the party's money was paying for it.

* * * * *

People spoke of Bob's death as a very good riddance, and there were no suspicions of foul play. The next evening Cassin quietly left the neighborhood, never more to return. He carried with him a plentiful supply of advice and almost two-thirds the value of his property. Both came from Stephen Booz.

When it was announced that Cassin had gone, there was general surprise. Booz did not wish to encourage it too extensively, so he spent the whole night in thought and in transferring these thoughts to paper. It was rather hard on the stationery, but Booz knew the tremendous importance of saying just enough and no more, and the less he said, the more he wanted, and the more he said, the less he wanted. It was the struggle of a great intellect over a campaign trick. At last the result came, and it came in this form, carefully written on a large sheet of paper:

"NOTICE!

"This place will no longer be an eyesore to the town. It has been bought by me, and it will be closed, pending repairs, to be opened by my son, John Booz, as a first-class store. No liquors of any kind will be kept or sold. All bills for liquor owed Michael Cassin are cancelled.

"STEPHEN BOOZ."

When the people read this the next morning they were thoroughly astonished. Astonishment soon gave way to pleasure. Even the old topers liked it. The debts

that had been hanging over them so long were taken off. They could begin all over again. Through all the excitement, Booz maintained an impassive serenity. It was a good bargain for him. He knew very well that he would never collect the bills, if he tried twenty years. Moreover, he had had the only good liquors and the best bottles quietly removed to his house at night, and when the old bottles and barrels were rolled out of the saloon and publicly destroyed, the liquid that flowed from them was mainly water sufficiently flavored to give it an aroma of alcohol and wickedness. It was a great time for Mr. Booz, and he accepted all the thanks and congratulations with the easy manner of a professional philanthropist.

"Ah, Brother Booz," said Mr. Canton, wringing his hand piously, "let me thank you for your good work in purging this district of that saloon."

"Mr. Canton, I've only done my duty, sir, as I understood it. You people have been accusing me of all sorts of things, and saying that I was opposed to temperance. While you preached I acted, and I think I have done more in one day's work than my enemies have done in five years. I hope that we will understand one another better hereafter."

Mr. Canton said unhesitatingly that he and his followers had done Mr. Booz an injustice. The reaction was even greater than the former opposition. The tide turned decisively toward Booz. He had all the currents just where he wanted them, and he was so confident of his control that he began to direct them against Madison. The first results were successful, and he easily foresaw the defeat of the courageous young attorney. In the abundance of his confidence he sat down and began a letter to the Hon. Warwick Jones. He wrote:

"Forkbridge, October 25.

"Mr. Warwick Jones:

"Dear Sir—I think we're all right. I've settled the temperance business by buying out Cassin, and thus removing the big point on which they were fighting. I will be elected sure, and I'm quite certain that the ticket is safe. As to Madison,"—here he turned to another of the small sheets of paper on which he was writing, and continued—*"we will defeat him in this district without a doubt, if you will only send us five or ten more tons of that fertilizer."*

A knock sounded on the door, and a voice announced, "Mr. Booz, a gentleman in the parlor wants to see you."

Booz went down and confronted Madison. He was surprised, but he concealed his feelings in an extra show of cordiality. In Forkbridge, hospitality is a religion above politics or business.

"Mr. Booz, I hope we are alone," said Madison. "I wish to talk to you confidentially about a little matter."

"Certainly, sir; go ahead. We are safe. But"—with a laugh—"I warn you beforehand that I cannot vote for you."

"Are you sure?" asked Madison, with peculiar emphasis.

Booz grew serious. "I don't understand," he said.

"Then I'll explain. In the first place, I'm going to win in this election."

Booz smiled.

"And what's more, you're going to help me."

Booz's smile grew broader.

"You think you have checkmated me in buying out Cassin's store and shutting up that saloon. It's a neat trick, but it may be an expensive one to your family."

"Expensive? How?" Mr. Booz's smile faded away.

"Who killed 'Catfish Bob'?"

"Killed? Whiskey, I guess."

"It did? Why did Cassin run away just after his death?"

"Did he run? I thought he just moved."

"I'll ask you a third question. Who pretended that they found Bob's body, and smuggled it into Cassin's store?"

Booz became strangely uneasy. "What do you mean?" he asked.

"I mean that circumstances I know of point to your son as one of the figures in a mystery that may demand an investigation from me as prosecuting attorney of this county."

Just then Mrs. Booz opened the door. Booz grasped the opportunity, and arose from his seat. "You want me? All right. Mr. Madison will excuse me a minute." And before Mrs. Booz could say anything he was pushing her out and closing the door behind him. As soon as he could he asked, "Where's John?" John was in the yard, and straight to him the candidate for Sheriff went.

"John," he said, "who was with you when you found that corpse?"

"I was by myself, but I called the other boys from the road just as soon as I found it."

"Where's Jim Barnes?"

"Why, Mr. Madison has taken him in his law office down to Quantico."

Booz turned at once toward the house. He did not hear his son ask, "What's the matter?" for he was thinking and deciding what to do. He returned to the room, and resumed his seat with as much ease as he could.

"Excuse this interruption, Mr. Madison. I had to get some money for my wife. Wives are almost as bad as assessment committees. But we were speaking about the Cassin matter. Surely, Mr. Madison, you do not think that my son could be guilty of anything so wrong?"

"Perhaps not; but an investigation like this would be a serious affair—a very serious affair. Suppose that evidence of blows should be found on Bob's body? Suppose that not two weeks before his death your son quarrelled with him?"

Booz knew very well that Cassin had struck Bob; he knew how ugly the whole affair would look. For a minute he left Mr. Madison's question unanswered, but he finally raised his head, and with a smile said: "Mr. Madison, I don't think you will be defeated. The sentiment in this district is very strong in your favor."

"I esteem your opinion very highly, Mr. Booz, and I take your word for it."

"You wouldn't do me a favor, I suppose?" said Mr. Booz, with another smile.

"Certainly, if I could."

"Well, send that boy Barnes up here for about two hours."

Both men looked at each other, and Madison laughed heartily.

"No, I can't do that," he replied; "it wouldn't be safe."

When Madison left, Booz's smile settled down into a rugged frown. He walked to the yard where John was, and taking him by the shoulder, said: "John, if you find any more corpses around this district, let 'em alone. Mind, I tell you, let 'em alone."

And going into the house, he slammed the door, and marched up-stairs to finish his letter. He destroyed the second sheet on which he had written, and took a fresh one, and after the words, "*As to Madison,*" he continued:

"It is impossible to defeat him. Sentiment here is too strong. Everybody is for him. The rest of the ticket, though, can be put through. I've used the fertilizer you recommended. It has been well distributed. Please send me five or ten tons more as soon as you can. Am sorry about Madison, but it can't be helped.

Yours, in haste,

"Stephen Booz."

The Hon. Warwick Jones frowned and swore when he read that letter, for he knew that Booz was a true prophet. And so indeed he was.

SLUMBERING JOSEPH.

WE are on a single track railroad. There is no store of any kind in the place and the hucksters are so irregular that good housewives who are members of church have been known to wager things on whether or not these condescending gentlemen with the hooded wagons would be around. When the meat fails to come from the city and the huckster either sells out before he reaches Sunnyside or forgets to come at all we eat eggs. This explains why a Sunnyside cook-book is more worn in the egg chapters than in all the other portions, and surely in the world there is not a place where the egg is more wondrously and more beautifully diversified than in Sunnyside Park.

We were talking about it one night at the doctor's, after conversation had developed that everybody had eaten eggs for breakfast that day and Mrs. Bloom had to send around and borrow the remaining supply because company had come unexpectedly for luncheon.

"If the doctrine of the transmigration of the soul be true," said the doctor,—"I do not believe it is true, but you cannot always tell about such things,—and if in the next existence we should find it true, I think, as friends and neighbors, we should all agree to flock together."

The idea of flocking, by a correct but unexpected logical process, led on to the proposition that we form a literary club. We were distinctly not literary. Indeed, our only literary passions were those resulting from the neglect of the train clerk to throw off our morning papers. But we needed something to bring us together and stimulate our intellectual faculties, and the idea seemed to fit. It was agreed to with considerable enthusiasm and we promptly called upon the doctor for all details of organization. He had particular notions concerning the carrying-out of the plan, and he said:

"Let us select a new name, a good American name. Let us do honor to one of our own writers whose work has been ignored in the naming of clubs."

Immediately there was a general desire that the doctor supply the name of the unremembered genius. But he replied that it was best to put it off until the next meeting,

when the suggestions of all could be received and acted upon.

We followed his advice and the next meeting was a great success. All the literature we knew was carefully gone over, and it was really surprising how familiar we were with most of the names. Our combined intelligence gave us a higher and a finer appreciation of ourselves; in fact we had begun to soar upon the wings of self-admiration when the business of the evening pulled us suddenly back to the earth.

What name was best? Which should we select? Irving? He was promptly objected to because he had been overused in the literary club business. Edgar Allen Poe? He went down without a particle of justification before the opposition of a vice-president of a woman's temperance society. Then Howells was mentioned, and he was unjustly slaughtered in the primaries because Mrs. Hopson said his women were not satisfactory. Then Mr. Bloom suggested Longfellow, but the young Henderson girl replied that if he were chosen she would not be able to think of the club without repeating, "Life is real, life is earnest," and that was worse than Mark Twain's "Five cent fare."

"Why not Mark Twain?"

The question came from several members. At first the double name was considered undesirable and when a Twain Club was mentioned, Wilson, who thinks he is a wit, quietly but promptly said that it sounded like the deuce. We were getting deeper and deeper when the doctor proposed that we compromise the matter. This we finally did and we called it the Shakespeare Club.

When it came to the election of officers, Hopson gave us a great surprise mainly because he seldom talked on the trains going in or coming out, and we got the impression that he was a man who had emptied too much of the fountain of youth into the currents of trade. But we were mistaken.

"It seems to me that there is only one man for president," Hopson said rather solemnly. "Our recent literature has pointed the way. We have as a popular hero a medical detective; we have in our later novels all sorts of diagnoses, analyses and clinics. And Pegasus when not galloping over a graveyard or drawing an ambulance is capering nimbly to a doctor's gig. I therefore nominate the doctor.

But while we applauded Hopson we declined to follow his advice. Our member-

ship was almost two-thirds feminine, and we left the presidency open, authorizing every meeting to select its presiding officer, if it wished one, and to alternate between the sexes. In this way we avoided any possible complication arising from the renewal of the fight for equal suffrage.

From the successful beginning of the Shakespeare Club, Sunnyside Park grew in sociability. Because he has a lot around his house, the average suburbanite soon begins to imagine that his fence encloses the larger part of the world. We had begun to be selfish, to draw ourselves into our own shells. There was no general purpose to bring us together. The men came home at night, ate their dinners, sat around and went to bed. Occasionally there had been a reception and we had gone to it as complainingly as boys to school. Gradually there had come over us a vague suspicion that suburban life was not the joyous existence the real estate men had pictured. The Shakespeare Club came at the right moment. We began very timidly, and our first proceedings consisted mainly of refreshments, but in good time we attacked the question of Shakespearean criticism. Owing to our inexperience and the individual reluctance to open the way,

we had to abandon the plan of skirmishers and make a general assault. So every member was ordered to present his or her views on the women of the immortal bard. The sketches were to be brief, in order that they might be crowded into one evening. We did our duty faithfully, and the program started out with great promise, but gradually it fagged and a feeling of despair settled like a nightmare upon us. The trouble was we had all pilfered from the same book, and we sat there a lot of crushed and self-convicted plagiarists.

We dropped literature and sought to drown its memory in the dissipation of cards and theatricals. The club's popularity continued with all except Sarah Dorton and John Black, who were approaching matrimony in long executive sessions which were disturbed once a week by the club meeting. Next to the club, John and Sarah were the main reliance of the Park. They had expected to be married before, but owing to the unlooked-for and very inopportune inconsistency of a jury in upholding a will from which John, as the counsel of the plaintiff, had great hopes, the date had been postponed. The match met with the favor of the Park's population, but it was being too long drawn out.

The Dorton house was the highest in the place. Gradually it became a Park weakness to regulate the night by the lone light in the parlor. "John is still there" was always understood. It grew so habitual that some of the ladies would go to sleep at early hours and wake up between eleven and twelve to see if the light was burning. It thus happened that John and Sarah began to interfere with sound slumber, and certain married men contended that if the nuptials were not celebrated within a reasonable time there would be an epidemic of insomnia in the Park. Worse than this, however, was the effect on Mr. Dorton. He was erratic, not to say mildly insane, over his furnace and was of the belief that if he did not attend to it the last thing every night, "the whole family," to use the doctor's plagiarized joke, "would wake up some morning and find themselves cremated." It was not pleasant for this middle-aged banker to arise after John went at midnight and make a trip to the cellar, even if he did regard the young man who was to become his son-in-law with unusual affection. John knew this and offered to go down and fix the furnace before his leave-taking, but Sarah assured him that it would never do to suggest such a thing to

her father, who was greatly devoted to the proprieties.

Near the end of October the Shakespeare Club met at the Addersly house, and the evening was typical of our literary entertainments. There was music, and following it were cards in which about one-half of the members participated. The rest of us formed in circles and gossiped. On this particular evening, however, we left the card-players in the library and assembled in the parlor. As usual, the ladies monopolized the conversation, and it did not take long for the servant question to arise in all its grim and ghastly vigor. It was declared, without any attempt at contradiction, that the tariff and the silver and all other such issues, then uppermost in the heated political campaign, were trifles compared to the servant question.

"Why, I hear the men saying they have too many changes in politics, too many elections, and all that sort of thing. They say one President in four years is too much, and getting a new Congress every two years is a nuisance. The reformers, the—ah,—what do you call them?—wigwams?" appealed Mrs. Addersly to Henry Wilson.

"Perhaps you mean mugwumps."

"Thank you. Those mugwumps—I read all about it in the papers, you know—say—please, Mr. Wilson, what do you call this turning around of people who have places in politics?" she asked again, accompanying the question with a rotary motion of her right hand.

"Rotation in office."

"They are opposed to this rotation in office," Mrs. Addersly continued briskly, talking swifter and becoming more eloquent all the time. "Why bless you, my dears," she exclaimed in peroration, "the servant question is a million times worse than rotation in office—it's perpetual motion. I've had six new ones in five weeks, and *I know*."

"Here is an idea," said Wilson. "Most of our trouble comes from the furnaces. The girls from the city won't bother with them, not only because they dislike it, but because they think it's a man's work, and that they ought not to be called upon to perform it. Now, we can't each afford to hire a man, because the furnace itself is expense enough, but by sharing the cost I do not see why we cannot do it easily. In other words, co-operate?"

"I am in favor of that," said Mrs. Dorton innocently but positively, and when

everybody laughed she thought a moment and then she laughed too.

If the Shakespeare Club had done nothing else for Sunnyside Park, this service alone would have doubly justified its existence. The Park is composed of two settlements, one on the lower avenue and the other further up on the hill, a good walking distance from the former. Six of the houses were scattered in the upper settlement, and these six families met in solemn conclave and determined to try co-operation as a solution of the furnace question.

Everything was ready except the man, but when there is a need there is someone to fill it. Out of the doubt Joseph came. Whence he came or how he came, no one knew. Our only knowledge was that he appeared. He had heard we wanted a man to attend furnaces. He respectfully applied for the place. Hopson argued it out in this irregular manner: The Shakespeare Club was responsible for Joseph; the Shakespeare Club came from the doctor's idea about flocking; and the doctor's idea about flocking came from an egg: therefore Joseph was *ab ovo*. He was past middle age, with a deep black, solemn face, and with a certain manly dignity, in spite of his stooping shoulders and his curious legs. His

language was so unnaturally stilted that we first questioned his mental soundness, but when the doctor said that big words and big linen dusters and big pills were three failings of the negro race, we accepted the explanation and admitted Joseph to our respect. When asked what pay he expected, Joseph replied:

"With your kind permission, I'll accept the customary remembrance for employment of that char-ract-ter." When we insisted that he name a figure, he replied: "I'll be pleased to accommerdate my pre-dilections to your circumferences." Finally, we offered him a dollar a week each, or six dollars in all, extremely good wages for a man of his class.

He was reticent about his home, but said in a general way that he resided out in the country near the "elected cars."

Joseph was taken in hand by Mr. Dorton, who was the furnace expert of the Park, and was diligently trained. When Mr. Dorton announced that he would be willing to trust his furnace to Joseph's management, we were at first incredulous, and then glad. Most of us remained up an hour later that night congratulating ourselves on this good fortune.

Nor were our expectations vain. Joseph was a blessing. He doubled the comfort

and cheerfulness of the Park. Not only did he attend to the furnaces perfectly, but he became the factor that regulated our happiness. There were no more late breakfasts or cold houses, and we had hot water for our bath tubs. He came before six and started the drafts. By seven there was a glow in each of the six houses. He became the herald of the morning, crying out gossip and pious philosophy in the dawn. As a result, the cooks were always up to greet him, and his thin, penetrating voice often drifted into the second-story where we were lazily recognizing the necessity of meeting the duties of another day.

"They say the most unsartin thing is a cat," he declared one morning. "You set it down and you can't tell which-a-way it will jump. But the most unsartin thing is a day. You kin never tell how it's agoin to come out. I say to you, sister, as a lowly member of the Church of Zion, dat we'd all better be layin' up treasures in heaven, where the moth of dis world will not break in and corrupt." He paused a moment, and then he went on more solemnly than ever. "Sometimes it appears to me dis life desembles one of these fine new furnaces of the which I am the superintendent and manager. It's mighty purty

when it starts out—clean inside, shiny on the kiver, drafts all on and a plenty of nice new coal; little slow at first, but a burnin' faster an' faster, and gitten hotter and hotter and sendin' nice warm air all through the house and makin' joy all 'round; but bime-by the blue flame gits white, black coal turns to ashes; grates chock up with clinkers, and where is the heat then? All burned out. Jest like life—jest like life. And ole Mr. Shakespeare could a writ a whole book on it."

Gradually the Shakespeare Club occupied itself more and more with chronicling the curious mistakes and elaborate views of Joseph. We found ourselves waking in the morning in the hope of catching something new from his sunrise conversations. Wilson finally said that between the sitting up of John Black and Sarah Dorton and the waking up to hear Joseph, an epidemic of insomnia was absolutely certain.

"What in heaven's name does that negro know about Shakespeare?" we asked; and before we could solve the mystery something happened. A burglary not far from our place caused a general purchase of firearms. One morning, about five o'clock, Hopson heard a person trying to effect an entrance into his house. Without pausing to investigate,

he began to fire in the direction of the noise. The man made a dash for the next house, and another volley sent him on to the third, by which time the Park was aroused and new pistols were being tried by their owners. Finally the man was heard running through the lower field, and afterwards there was silence. We had to attend to our own furnaces that morning, and we felt like dealing rashly with Hopson. His claim, that as Joseph was an hour ahead of time the mistake was natural, did not entirely remove our sense of wrong. Later in the day the following note was received and circulated:

Gentlemen, Mr. Hopson, Sir:—Kindly inform the gentlemen of your place that a dollar a week do not include bein' shot at. I know I were a little early, but hereafter you needn't look for me till daybreak.

Respectfully, JOSEPH MACBETH.

*P. S.—'Tis a vile thing to die, my gracious lord,
When men are unprepared and look not
for it.* —Shakespeare.

It was the first time we knew his last name. Its inappropriateness soon appeared; for this Macbeth did not murder sleep. He acquired a habit of slumbering

at his work. We found that he carried a volume of Shakespeare, and when he and Shakespeare were left together he soon nodded.

The Shakespeare Club felt itself in honor bound to solve the mystery of Joseph's book. He did not want to tell us at first, but finally he confessed that it was given him in return for five coupons. Anybody using five bottles of Dr. Quack's "Conservator of Health" and sending on the coupons would receive any one of more than a hundred of the classics of literature. "I took this," Joseph explained, "because it had the most pages, and I'd heard our preacher mention the gentleman's name."

"What do you think of Shakespeare?"

"I went to a circus onct," he replied, "and saw a man pile more things than you kin git in a two-horse cart on top of one-another and keep 'em balanced. Seemsto me Mr. Shakespeare's mostly as wonderful as that man was. He kin pile more big words on top of each other and tangle 'em more'n anybody I ever read after—and the more they try to git away the more he holds 'em. And he's down on doctors—he's down on doctors, and I like him for that."

It seemed that someone was ill at Joseph's house. At first he reported it to be

a case of "ommonia," but he afterwards pronounced it a mild case of "remission fever." His ability to mispronounce diseases became a source of unending mirth to the club. Wilson declared that he had heard him call general debility "promiscuous devility," and nervous prostration, "nervous consternation," but while Mr. Wilson never lied he had a very industrious fancy. Rheumatism of course became "rheumatics"—it generally does with negroes—and one of Joseph's favorite ailments was a "delectation of the heart." It ran through all the grades of elaborate mispronunciation, culminating in a version of inflammation of the tonsils that went beyond credulity.

In the midst of our hilarity came a great shock. Joseph was found asleep at his post. The Dorton house was so arranged that the building proper was independent of the cellar. Joseph had a key to the cellar-door, and came and went without interference with anyone. John Black had quickly grasped the possibilities of the arrangement, and had contracted with Joseph at a consideration of an extra dollar a week to remain in the cellar and attend to the furnace after his call was over. For a while all went well, but one cold December

night, Joseph fell asleep and awoke to find the fuel burned out, the furnace cold, and Mr. Dorton standing angrily over him. He opened his eyes, looked wildly at the daylight coming through the cellar window, and, muttering what seemed to be words of apology and alarm, walked to the step, lifted the door and hastened in a straight line across the field. We all had to attend to our own fires that morning, and when we found out the cause our indignation was promptly concentrated upon the head of John Black.

That night we had to look to our furnaces again, and we spent the evening regretting Joseph and abusing John Black. All at once our happiness had gone under a cloud.

"Strange how much depends upon one man sometimes, and he only getting six dollars a week," said Mary.

"Seven," I replied.

"Oh, yes; John—the villain!"

We looked for the next morning with anxiety. Would Joseph return? The Wilson rooster—the Cochin-China which Wilson boasts so much of—mistook the moonlight for dawn and crowed us into error. But we kept still and waited. Five o'clock struck. Tick! tick! tick! Half-past five—

what was that noise! A steady tread on the frozen road. Nearer and nearer it came. We heard the click of the key in the cellar lock. Joy unspeakable! It was Joseph.

By the time he emerged from the cellar, Eliza, our cook, was on the back porch with her morning greeting.

Joseph was very humble. "I would be deeply obligated, Miss Eliza," he said, "if you would signify to the gentleman and lady that I was overcome with a spell of the dropsy. When I am in that condition I jest naturally slumber. It appears to me my eyelids is so asphyxiated that they won't separate." This apology delivered to the cook of each of the six houses led to the name of Slumbering Joseph.

After that Joseph had other fits of slumbering. He became more irregular in his work. He talked to the cooks of symptoms, and spoke medical terms with learned gravity. He developed a mania for patent medicine almanacs and carefully cut patent medicine advertisements from the newspapers. A meeting of the Shakespeare Club gathered together many of his lingual eccentricities. Wilson's report was probably the most interesting, although possibly not the most reliable. According to his account, Joseph spoke as follows:

"There are three unsartain things in this world: viz, namely: A cat is unsartain, a day is unsartain, but the most unsartain thing is ailments. Here are treatises giving us information on the subject, and still it's mighty hard to understand. For incidents, here's marasmus and troubles of the liver, and typhoid fever and information of the throat, and mighty near two dozen other epidemics, and here are the symptoms—by which is meant the feelings, that is to say, the convulsions and convulsions—and in these symptoms I find such things as a 'forlorn feeling,' 'a feeling of depression,' 'a general desire for inactivity,' 'a great inclination to rest,' and 'a lack of willingness to work.' Have you ever felt this way, sister?"

The cook replied that she was frequently tired, "which," Wilson added, "is not a symptom, but a general condition." and Joseph continued: "That's it perzactly, All these words mean perzactly that, but there is hope, sister; there is hope. One bottle cures everything from stone bruise to cholera morbus and the recuperation of the hair."

The doctor, who lived on the lower avenue, and who undoubtedly had a jealous feeling in regard to our experiment in co-

operation, spoke up: "The man's crazy on nostrums, and before you know it he'll have all your servants ruining themselves with patent medicines. You had better speak to him about it."

We intended to do so, but Joseph developed melancholy tendencies and hinted at misfortunes, which we felt without knowing what they were. One day we suggested to him that he call in the doctor. The effect was astonishing. The whites of his eyes seemed to grow into moons floating through the consternation of his startled countenance. "They kill," he replied tremblingly, at the same time drawing an almanac from his pocket. Opening this well-worn pamphlet he pointed to paragraphs relating to cases miraculously cured after physicians had given up all hope; to testimonials of people who had been ruined by doctors in health and in purse and then snatched from untimely graves by only two bottles, and finally to the experience of a man seventy-eight years old, who, thanks to the efficacy of the medicine, "could jump up and pop his feet together twice before he touched the ground."

In some respects Joseph was a diplomatist. He thought he saw a temporary advantage in the impression the book had created, and he quickly followed it up:

"Times is a little tight, sir; a little detracted, sir; and maybe you might want to favor the old man by permitting him to draw this week's remembrance in advance. I'd be greatly obligated, sir."

He got the dollar. That evening he did not come to fix the furnace. There was a meeting of the Shakespeare Club, and we discussed this second dereliction with great earnestness. We still believed in him, but our faith was weakened by the discovery that he had drawn all his pay in advance including John Black's extra dollar. The next day he did not appear. The third day he was missing. We were in the depths of despair. We never knew until then how necessary Joseph was to our comfort. We determined if possible to find him. A good servant is too priceless in our vicinity to be let go if any inducement can prevail. On inquiry, we ascertained that a few hours after his disappearance from Sunnyside, he was seen on the electric car bound for the city. Late at night he returned on the same car. After that no one had seen or known anything of him. We called on the doctor and asked him if he would go with us to Joseph's home.

After diligent searching, we found Joseph's house, but there was no sign of life

around it. We pushed on through the dark hall, and in another room, by the light of the only window we saw Joseph leaning over the bed intently gazing into the wasted face of a woman, almost as black as he was. The room was cold. He had a gaunt look, but the hungriness of his face was almost lost in the intensity of his gaze. He seemed totally oblivious to everything except the woman.

"You'll be all right soon," he said tenderly and confidently. "All right soon, wife." There were no big words now. "The other medicine wasn't strong enough," he went on. "I thought it was, but I mistook your symptoms. But this—this—why Sarinda, I told you yesterday, and I tell you again, I've saved and saved and got 'em to pay my wages in advance, and we've starved and starved jes for this, to save your life. It cost twenty dollars. Its 'lectricity, Sarinda. 'Lectricity. Here's what the book says." And he read a lot of nonsense about magnetism and magnetic currents and the compound terms familiar in that sort of quackery.

"Sometimes it cures first day, sometimes second day, but it's sure on the third. This is the third day, Sarinda, and it must—it must—work. Look at me, wife. Look at

Joseph. Tell me you feel stronger—tell me—”

Her eyes closed, and Joseph, in his suspense, fell upon his knees.

He ceased praying and bent over her again appealingly.

“Sarinda, the time is come. Give me a sign. Lift up your hand, and look at me. *Look, wife, look.*”

Almost imperceptibly the hand moved, the eyes began to unclose, but just as the hand was clear of the bed and the eyes half open there came a collapse.

Joseph stood for a moment as if stunned. Then his poor trembling hand went hopelessly to his forehead. After a pause he bent down and listened. The look of fear in his face deepened into indescribable agony as the awful suspicion came over his scattered senses. He sprang to his feet, crying with a voice like the desperate roar of a despairing animal: “*They lied. They lied. And I have gone and killed her.*”

When we went on into the room Joseph was furiously tearing almanacs and circul-lars amid cries and imprecations, and around him were the fragments of the nostrum advertisements. So engrossing was his fury he did not notice us, and when we tried to get him into the next room we had to remove him by main force.

When we returned, the doctor had made his examination. "She is not dead," he said. "She has only fainted from weakness, but she is as near starvation as any person I ever saw. I feel quite confident that good care and proper nourishment will save her."

The Shakespeare Club had tried many things from taffy-pullings and progressive euchre to musicales and an evening with Browning, but charity had not come within its experiences. We were anxious for novelties, and the case of Joseph and Sarinda appealed to us strongly, especially when we learned that Joseph's slumbers and other irregularities were caused by his attentions at the bedside of his wife, and that in his poor misguided way he had starved himself as well as Sarinda in order to buy medicines in whose efficacy he had such absolute faith.

We held a series of festivals and donation parties, and on the proceeds Joseph and Sarinda returned speedily to health. In presenting her acknowledgments, Sarinda, who was not as intellectual as Joseph, said: "I never was sick nohow till Joe done gone crazy on sniptoms and ailments."

Sarinda is the cook for Mr. and Mrs. John Black (nee Dorton) who were married after John got a new trial of the will case and won it, and Joseph still attends to the furnaces. He does not talk as much to the cooks as he formerly did, because Sarinda, having lost faith in her husband's infallibility, is making experiments in domestic tyranny.

The doctor says that this is a fine illustration of human nature, and Wilson used it to aid a point in his alleged humorous lecture before the Club on "The Despotism of the Weaker Sex When It Holds the Stronger Hand."



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